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OBSERVATIONS
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OBSERVATIONS
ON
THE CHARACTER, CUSTOMS,
AND
SUPERSTITIONS
OF
THE IRISH;
AND
ON SOME OF THE CAUSES
WHICH HAVE RETARDED THE MORAL AND
POLITICAL IMPROVEMENT
OF IRELAND.

“ Green be thy fields—sweetest isle of the ocean !”

BY DANIEL DEWAR.

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TO

THOMAS BROWN, M.D.

PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY

IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

THIS VOLUME

IS INSCRIBED,

IN TESTIMONY OF

THE RESPECT AND AFFECTION

OF

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

ON some of the subjects considered in the following pages, men, equally wise and good, think very differently: I presume, however, that there can be but one opinion entertained respecting other topics brought under review. The expediency and necessity of bestowing immediate attention on the general improvement of Ireland, are points which scarcely admit of any contrariety of sentiment; though it is not to be supposed that the same unanimity will prevail in judging of the means by which this important object is to be accomplished.

He who wishes well to mankind, will naturally desire to do good on the largest

scale which his power will admit; but a very little acquaintance with human nature will convince him, that in order to benefit men effectually, it is necessary to carry even the schemes of benevolence into execution gradually. For, as labour is greatly facilitated, as well as its quantity augmented by its division, so the facility of doing good, and the certainty of ultimately succeeding in every design for its accomplishment, depend very much on allowing our operations to be under the direction of a similar principle.

I am aware that I may have entered too fully into the consideration of the advantages of a national system of education, viewed as a question in political science. I flatter myself, however, that the remarks on this subject will tend to illustrate the utility of affording moral and religious instruction to the inferior orders; and may suggest hints on the means which should be employed for ameliorating the state of Ireland.

It was once intended to have entered very fully into the consideration of the poetry, customs, and superstitions of the native Irish ; but these topics will probably be made the subject of a future publication.

London,

April 14th, 1812.

The Reader will observe an error in the paging of the Notes, arising from the circumstance of the book having been divided in order to expedite its progress through the Press. From the same cause the pages are renewed in the body of the work.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. I.

<i>Introduction</i>	.	.	<i>Page 1</i>
---------------------	---	---	---------------

CHAP. II.

<i>The Character of the Irish</i>	.	<i>21</i>
-----------------------------------	---	-----------

CHAP. III.

<i>The Character of the Irish continued—Remarks on the Poetry and Music of the Irish</i>		
<i>—on their Bards, Senachies, and Harpers</i>		<i>48</i>

CHAP. IV.

<i>On the Irish Language</i>	.	<i>86</i>
------------------------------	---	-----------

▲

CHAP. V.

	<i>Page.</i>
<i>Remarks on some parts of the History of Ire-</i>	
<i>land</i>	102

CHAP. VI.

<i>The Progress of the Reformation in Ireland—</i>	
<i>Remarks on the State of Morals and Reli-</i>	
<i>gion, before this Period</i>	113

CHAP. VII.

<i>Additional Remarks on the Reformation, and</i>	
<i>on the Causes by which its Progress in Ire-</i>	
<i>land has been retarded</i>	124

CHAP. VIII.

<i>On the Progress of English Law and Govern-</i>	
<i>ment in Ireland</i>	144

CHAP. IX.

Page.

The same subject continued—The Penal Code [1

CHAP. X.

Catholic Emancipation . . . [34

CHAP. XI.

*On the Means which should be employed for
the Instruction of the Native Irish* [66

SECT. I.

*General Remarks on the Advantages of Na-
tional Education* . . . [66

SECT. II.

*On the Education of the lower Orders of the
Irish* . . . [115

SECT. III.

*On the Utility of Preaching in the Irish Lan-
guage* . . . [141

CHAP. XII.

<i>On the Poverty of the Peasantry, and inferior Orders of the Irish</i>	Page. [148
--	------------



<i>Notes</i>	.	.	.	331.
--------------	---	---	---	------

OBSERVATIONS,

&c.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION.

THAT science whose inquiries are directed to the discovery of the sources of human happiness, and to those impediments which ignorance, prejudice, and political arrangements present to its progress, is doubtless worthy of all the study and patient attention which a subject so important demands. And though at present it is only in the infancy of its being, it has bestowed many invaluable blessings on the world.

To discriminate accurately those circumstances and events which may have influenced the national character of any people ; to trace and unfold the causes united in its formation ; and to develop those obstacles which have opposed or retarded these causes in their

operation, forms one of those departments of philosophical investigation that can never become useless or uninteresting. The subject, considered in this extended light, is, however, attended with many difficulties. The early history of all nations is necessarily involved in obscurity and fable; political institutions as well as national habits and peculiarities have had their origin for the most part from circumstances which are now unknown: to form theoretical conjectures, therefore, is all to which any claim can be laid; which conjectures, however happy, will always be attended with some degree of that doubt and obscurity which they are intended to remove.

Besides, even within the period of authentic history, some of the circumstances which have a powerful influence on the character and destiny of nations are far from being universally obvious. In this respect the history of a people is not unlike that of an individual: a circumstance so trivial as to escape his own attention, may produce a series of events, all of which contribute to form his character and fix the part appointed him to perform in human life. In many cases, however, it must be allowed, that in tracing the origin of national peculiarity and improvement the same difficulties do not exist. That one government will produce one

set of manners, and a different government another set, is a fact obvious to every one; though it is only philosophers who think it of importance to observe the adaptation of these various institutions to the production of a state of things still more various. “Where the
“government of a nation is altogether republi-
“can, it is apt to beget a peculiar set of man-
“ners. Where it is altogether monarchical,
“it is more apt to have the same effect; the
“imitation of superiors spreading the national
“manners among the people. If the govern-
“ing part of a state consists altogether of
“merchants, as in Holland, their uniform way
“of life will fix their character. If it consists
“chiefly of nobles and landed gentry, like
“Germany, France and Spain, the same effect
“follows. The genius of a particular sect of
“religion is also apt to mould the manners of
“a people. The English government is a mix-
“ture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy.
“The people in authority are composed of
“gentry and merchants. All sects of religion
“are to be found among them. And the
“great liberty and independence which every
“man enjoys, allows him to display the man-
“ners peculiar to him. Hence the English,
“of any people in the universe, have the least

“ of a national character; unless this very singularity may pass for such.”*

A family affords in miniature a good representation of a tribe or people. The principle of imitation and mutual sympathy, so powerful in human nature, leads the little members of this little community to resemble, not merely their parents, but often one another, in disposition, manner and genius. This principle accounts for that similarity of character to be met with among people of the same district, of the same county, and of the same kingdom. We insensibly assume the habits of thinking and action of those with whom we associate. It is not necessary, therefore, to maintain, as some have done, that physical causes occasion the diversity of manners observable in different nations; this is sufficiently accounted for, and certainly not less intelligibly, by the unbounded influence which moral causes exert on the mind. The laws of association, like those of gravitation, are uniform in their action; their force is felt in the various scenes and occupations of life; we may easily assign to their operation, therefore, that variety of moral phenomena which distinguish the different nations of our globe.

* Hume's Essay on National Character.

As to the obstacles which retard national improvement, they may in general be considered as arising from political institutions, from national religion, or from the prejudices and habits of the people.

(1.) Political institutions. These have an astonishing power in creating or destroying the happiness of mankind; in augmenting or counteracting, and diminishing national opulence and prosperity. In legislating, therefore, for the human race, it is necessary, not only that statesmen should mean well; they should of all others be the most enlightened. In this case, benevolence, unaccompanied with general views, and a considerable portion of that foresight which embraces the interests of distant ages, as well as the happiness of the present times, will unfortunately do much harm. The very eagerness to do good, will, it is probable, prompt to an interference in circumstances in which every such interference must be injurious.

There is no principle in political science more conformable to truth than this, that the prosperity of the community is best promoted by leaving every individual to pursue, without any other restraint than that which eternal justice and equity imposes, his own interest in that way which he may conceive most agreeable

to himself. Happy had it been for Europe, and the world, if this maxim had regulated the conduct of its rulers ! Every branch of human industry and labour would then advance in its natural order ; and without entertaining any visionary prospect, we might confidently expect the certain though gradual amelioration of human enjoyment. Men will improve themselves, if the circumstances in which they are placed furnish a stimulus to that improvement ; they will also acquire wealth, if their industry be rewarded and its effects enjoyed ; and, generally speaking, they will become intelligent and virtuous, if the means of obtaining knowledge be fairly placed within their power.

“ What is the species of domestic industry
“ which his capital can employ, and of which the
“ produce is likely to be of the greatest value,
“ every individual, it is evident, can, in his local
“ situation, judge much better than any states-
“ man or lawgiver can do for him. The states-
“ man, who should attempt to direct private
“ people in what manner they ought to employ
“ their capitals, would not only load himself with
“ a most unnecessary attention, but assume an
“ authority which could safely be trusted, not
“ only to no single person, but to no council or
“ senate whatever, and which would nowhere be
“ so dangerous as in the hands of a man who had

“ folly and presumption enough to fancy him-
 “ self fit to exercise it.*

“ That security which the laws in Great Bri-
 “ tain give to every man, that he shall enjoy the
 “ fruits of his own labour, is alone sufficient to
 “ make any country flourish, notwithstanding
 “ absurd regulations of commerce; and this se-
 “ curity was perfected by the revolution. The
 “ natural effort of every individual to better his
 “ own condition, when suffered to exert itself
 “ with freedom and security, is so powerful a
 “ principle, that it is alone, and without any
 “ assistance, not only capable of carrying on the
 “ society to wealth and prosperity ; but of sur-
 “ mounting a hundred impertinent obstructions
 “ with which the folly of human laws too often
 “ incumbers its operations ; though the effect
 “ of these obstructions is always more or
 “ less either to encroach upon its freedom, or to
 “ diminish its security. In Great Britain indus-
 “ try is perfectly secure ; and though it is far
 “ from being perfectly free, it is as free or freer
 “ than in any other part of Europe.”†

It is, no doubt, natural to every being pos-
 sessed of power, to wish that others should
 have proofs of its existence. And statesmen
 must feel inclined to perpetuate their fame and
 aggrandise their country by the effect of their

* Smith's Inquiry, v. ii. p. 182.

† Ibid, v. ii. p. 319.

own legislative authority. But let them recollect, that their country can only be truly aggrandised by removing every obstruction to industry, virtue, and happiness; and that every effort to obtain these ends by counteracting the established order of nature is worse than useless.

Besides, it ought to be remarked, that political institutions, when injurious, produce evils which cannot be removed by the removal of the institutions. Perhaps, they have given the impetus of the national mind a direction in which it will continue to move for ages, though that direction may be hostile to the interest of the people: they probably have given rise to prejudices which can only be effaced by a length of time and many counteracting principles. In such circumstances, even an enlightened legislator, whose first passion is the love of human kind, may have the deepest cause to regret, that he lives in an age when his benevolent exertions must be limited by the ignorance, folly, and corruption of his predecessors. “A
“scheme, however happily imagined, may, by
“the obstacles which oppose, by the difference
“of the genius and character of the people, by
“the force of those laws they have adopted, and
“by long custom, which, as it were, stamps a seal
“upon them, become alike chimerical and impracticable. Time only, and long experience,

“ can bring remedies to the defects in the cus-
 “ toms of a state whose form is already deter-
 “ mined.”*

These remarks are illustrated and confirmed by a survey of the history of Europe. It is not my object, however, to enter into detail on this particular; indeed, without any such details, all will agree as to the truth of the following observations by professor Stewart, which in one sentence expresses all that I wish to advance on this head. Of occasional evils, (or evils over which the bulk of mankind have no controul,) he says, that “ no inconsiderable part
 “ may be traced to the obstacles, which human
 “ institutions oppose to the order of things
 “ recommended by nature.” It is elsewhere observed by the same author, that “ the parti-
 “ cular form, which the political union happens,
 “ in the case of any community to assume, deter-
 “ mines many of the most important circum-
 “ stances in the character of the people, and
 “ many of those opinions and habits which
 “ affect the happiness of private life.”†

The blessings which are enjoyed under a liberal system of government, are so forcibly described by Brydone in the following passage, that I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting it. He is contrasting the wretched condi-

* Sully's Memoirs, v. ii. p. 40.

† Outlines of Moral Philosophy.

tion of Sicily, formerly the granary of the Roman empire, and still, as it merely regards the soil, the finest country in the world, with that of Switzerland, the most mountainous of Europe.

“ What a contrast is there betwixt this and the
“ little uncouth country of Switzerland!--To be
“ sure, the dreadful consequences of oppression
“ can never be set in a more striking opposition
“ to the blessings and charms of liberty. Swit-
“ zerland, the very excrescence of Europe, where
“ nature seems to have thrown out all her cold
“ and stagnating humours; full of lakes, marshes,
“ and woods, and surrounded by immense rocks,
“ and everlasting mountains of ice, the barren,
“ but sacred, ramparts of liberty. Switzerland,
“ enjoying every blessing, where every blessing
“ seems to have been denied; whilst Sicily,
“ covered by the most luxuriant hand of nature;
“ where heaven seems to have showered down
“ its richest blessings with the utmost prodi-
“ gality, groans under the most abject poverty,
“ and with a pale and wan visage, starves in
“ the midst of plenty. It is liberty alone that
“ works this standing miracle. Under her
“ plastic hands the mountains sink, the lakes
“ are drained, and these rocks, these marshes,
“ these woods, become so many sources of
“ wealth and pleasure.”*

* Brydone's Tour through Sicily and Malta, v. ii. p. 35.

(2.) The state of a nation with regard either to its deterioration or improvement, depends also on its religion. If that be full of bigotry and intolerance ; if its genius be hostile to the progress of knowledge, there can be no question but it will form the best security to corrupt rulers, and a most powerful impediment to the civil liberty and general happiness of the subject. Religious prejudices are of all others the worst, because they are the most inveterate ; and you may as soon attempt to stop the torrent in its headlong course, as instantaneously to change the bias of a nation, when that bias owes its existence to the influence of a narrow and degrading superstition.

It is true, it sometimes fortunately happens, that such a superstition is not very intimately associated with the concerns of life, and, therefore, has less power on the progress of human affairs. When, however, it interferes with the prerogative of the magistrate ; when it presumes to dictate to the sovereign and the senate of the people ; when its leading maxim is that ignorance and incapacity form the security of the multitude ; and when it proscribes as heretics, and punishes as infidels, all who do not adhere to its dogmas, then, indeed, it produces the most baneful effects of the most baneful superstition. And it is difficult to say, what

greater curse heaven in its wrath can inflict on mortals : it takes away the power as well as the inclination of noble and liberal exertion ; it destroys some of the most important sources of human happiness ; and unlike the tempest which lowers and darkens only to produce a more brilliant sunshine, it spreads a cloud of night over the land, which the brightest rays of genius may long attempt in vain to penetrate, and the clearer light of revelation be scarcely able to remove.

How unlike the rational, and mild, and beneficial, and ennobling religion which nature approves, and which God prescribes. This is the religion of peace, and joy, and righteousness, of mercy, and forgiveness ; possessing nothing gloomy or forbidding, but all mildness, and gentleness, and love :—destitute of all local peculiarities, of expensive rites, of unmeaning ceremonies, it has no temple, no altar ; it comes like heaven's fairest gift, forcing itself on the attention of none, refusing violence in every instance for its support, but freely offering its benefits to all. How opposed to all the disgusting pomp and bigotry, and cruelty of superstition.

The influence which this religion exerts on civil liberty and national prosperity may be indirect, but it is powerfully efficient. It makes the people more thoughtful and less turbulent,

more enterprising and less fickle, more attentive to order and subordination, but more impatient under real oppression and tyranny. To whom are we indebted for British freedom ? to men who could not bear the yoke of ecclesiastical bondage ; to men who may have been called puritans and fanatics, but who certainly possessed a sound judgment, and were animated by a noble enthusiasm. “ Their views, far from
 “ being odious, are surely large, and generous,
 “ and noble : to their prevalence and success the
 “ nation owes its liberty ; perhaps its learning,
 “ its industry, commerce, and naval power: by
 “ them chiefly the English name is distinguished
 “ among the society of nations, and aspires to a
 “ rivalship with that of the freest and most illustrious commonwealths of antiquity.”*

(3.) I have said also that certain prejudices retard the improvement of nations. These have their origin either from political institutions, or from national religion, or from circumstances peculiar to the history of the people who entertain them : all, from the philosopher to the peasant, are, though unconscious to themselves, in a greater or less degree, subject to their influence. There is no profession, no department of life, no literary or trading corporation,

* Hume's *Essay on the Coalition of Parties*, p. 431.

which is exempted from their controul, and that has not to contend with the prejudices peculiar to its party, more confined indeed than those which are national, but not less powerful, not less efficient in modifying and forming the character. So much is man the child of habit and influenced in all his conduct by prepossession, that the religious, or political, or literary sect with which he has always associated, may frequently be distinguished, by the direction it has given to the usual current of his ideas, to the predominant bias of his mind, to his pursuits, and taste, and feelings. His very language, without the aid of which he can scarcely form an accurate conception, exercises a power over his thinking habits unknown to himself; a power which, because it is constantly present to every one, and seems as obsequious to the clown as to the orator, is not, as a source of error, often felt or observed, but which on this very account is more universal than any other cause.

The prejudices, however, that are common to a nation are more palpable than such as are peculiar to the several parties into which the nation is divided. In some instances, indeed, it may be difficult to ascertain in what proportions political and moral causes have combined to produce them; to say where the former be-

gan and the latter terminated their operation, since they may be so modified by the varying circumstances of ages as to render their nature complex and their origin obscure. Besides, they may continue in all their force long after the local peculiarities and arrangements from which they had arisen are forgotten. But in all ordinary cases, it is not difficult to trace the more common prejudices, or such as are truly national, to either of the causes already mentioned. And hence the variety of inveterate prepossessions of different nations arise from their various forms of religion, and political institutions: and these, while they become a barrier to the introduction of every thing that is new, present, it may be, an obstacle, in the direction in which they tend to every thing that is truly salutary and ameliorating.

It must be allowed, however, that there are cases in which prejudices and popular opinions may be conducive to individual happiness and national prosperity. If, in the multitude, they are the result of the maxims and institutions of a free country, and are formed with the most favourable aspect to civil and religious liberty, they then come in aid of the sober dictates of reason and philosophy, and give energy and effect to the enlightened deductions of the sage, and the generous efforts of the legislator: and

thus combined, they carry on the society, with a silent but irresistible force, through the progressive stages of improvement and opulence, to that consummation of moral and political perfection, which perhaps no nation has ever yet attained. For example, how greatly is the prosperity of Scotland owing to the popular opinion of its inhabitants, that it is mean and disgraceful to them, to permit either themselves or their relatives to become dependent on the public ! This opinion is strictly national, peculiar to the country north of the Tweed ; and to perceive its immense utility, it is only necessary to observe the effects which result from the want of it, not merely in the neighbouring states, but in other parts of our own empire. In England the labouring classes have no such feeling ; they have no apprehension of shame and wretchedness arising from a state of absolute dependence ; they have not, therefore, the same incentive to industry, the same anxiety to make some provision for sickness and old age : they enter the workhouse, if not with pleasurable emotions, certainly with the absence of such as are painful, and seem to consider themselves as respectable and happy when they receive their food from the parish, as when they procured it by their labour. It is not my business at present to inquire into

those causes which produced this popular opinion in the one case, or into those which occasioned the want of it in the other : I have mentioned it as one instance out of many that may be adduced to shew, how inveterate opinions and prejudices may have a favourable or unfavourable influence on national industry and happiness.

That kind and beneficent Being who has so constituted the mind of man as to make some share of individual happiness compatible almost with any state of society, has provided for his comfort by that very principle of his nature which leads him to form strong prejudices, and which, therefore, when under improper direction, leads him astray. While it prompts him to look with affection on every object to which he has long been accustomed, it tends to reconcile him to the evils which necessarily mingle with his lot, and to produce a greater degree of satisfaction and enjoyment, than otherwise, if placed in the same circumstances, he could have possessed. How happy is it when the objects with which he has always been surrounded are good ; when the political and religious views and opinions to which he has conformed himself, are conducive to the highest moral attainment of man ; and when the prepossessions which are interwoven with the

very essence of his mind, are such as no one can ever wish to see destroyed !

Though it is not in the power of the legislator to deliver the multitude completely from the dominion of prejudices, he may by his efforts greatly diminish the force of such as are injurious ; as he may, on the other hand, from considerations of policy, give them additional strength by associating them with the best feelings of the heart. The guilt, however, which he incurs, who by his talents or his address fosters the prejudices of the people in opposition to the moral or political good of society, is infinitely greater than that of Cæsar or Alexander, who, for the sake of being accounted the conquerors of the world, sacrificed its interests to their ambition : the guilt of the latter was chiefly restricted to the period which terminated their own dark and destructive career, and without any farther accumulation accompanied them to the tribunal of eternal justice ; but so long as his opinions continue to exert their influence, that of the former is transmitted with increased aggravation to distant ages.

Political institutions which are confessedly bad, combined with ignorance and superstition in the multitude, retard the improvement of nations, chiefly by the prejudices to which they give rise. The institutions themselves

may be destroyed by successive revolutions of empires, but unless a similar revolution takes place in the public mind, the same prejudices remain to obstruct the progress of knowledge and civilization, and to render fruitless the best attempts of the patriot and the philosopher. How then is the influence of such prejudices to be diminished? There seems no way in which this can be done effectually but by the general instruction of the people. To deliver them, indeed, from the power of opinion, it is vain ever to expect; nor, though it were possible, is it desirable, that such a change in the constitution of society should take place. But it is surely possible by a national system of education, and by other means of communicating information, to make the very prejudices of the people subservient to their political and moral improvement, and to make even the weaknesses of man "lean to virtue's side."

The object of these remarks on political institutions, popular prejudices, and national religion, can scarcely be misunderstood by anyone. Its connection with the design of these pages, which is to offer a few observations on some of the causes which have retarded the moral, political, and religious improvement of Ireland, is very apparent. Let it not be supposed, however, that I mean to enter very profoundly into

this intricate subject; my only aim is to advance some detached hints respecting the difficulties in question, and to point out the means by which they may be removed, or their influence counteracted and overcome.—A tour through that country has enabled me to prosecute inquiries which otherwise could not be conducted with the same facility and advantage. An acquaintance with the Irish language has put it in my power to enter more fully into the views and prejudices of the Irish nation, than the mere English traveller could possibly have done.—My book, such as it is, I present to the public, with the sincerest desire to promote the interests of a nation, which may, at some future period, be the glory of the British empire.

CHAP. II.

THE CHARACTER OF THE IRISH.

IN Ireland there are two classes of people perfectly distinct in genius, manners, customs, and dispositions, as unlike each other as the lowland peasantry of Scotland are to that of the Highlands, or as those of England are to that of either. A stranger in that country, therefore, is in danger of falling into one of these two errors; either of forming his opinion of the national character from one of these classes; or, if he should see part of both, of imbibing prejudices from the one unfavourable to the other, and of being hurried into an erroneous conclusion from partial and imperfect observation.

The Anglo-Hibernian differs more from the native Irish, than he does from the English. His character is rather complex: it is composed of qualities which are common to this country and his own, with some marked peculiarities which are distinct from either. Though he is proud of being an Irishman, he is full of

prejudice against the aborigines of his country ; he heartily hates their language, their customs, and their superstitions ; and is not unwilling that they should be considered less friendly to the government and constitution than himself. Possessed of this violent antipathy he is little qualified to receive accurate information, or to entertain a just opinion respecting them ; and, accordingly, while he thinks he perfectly understands their character, he is really much more ignorant for the most part on this head, than the intelligent, the candid, and the unbiassed traveller. He looks with contempt on the poor unlettered native, a feeling that has been transmitted from his ancestors, and is interwoven with his earliest associations.

To this character of the Anglo-Hibernian there are obviously many exceptions. In every country there are many individuals who rise above the opinions and prejudices which characterise the multitude of their nation. The remarks which I have made on this subject are in general to be restricted in their application to the character of the *people*.

As to the original Hibernian, his character has not been well nor generally understood. Few have examined it with friendly disposition, and still fewer have been placed in circumstances favourable to investigation, or have

had the qualifications requisite to form a fair and impartial judgment. An original Irishman resembles in many respects a Highlander; in some grand outlines he is indeed different, but this should be attributed perhaps to his situation, which is certainly little calculated to unfold his genuine character, rather than to any great essential distinction. To a stranger altogether unacquainted with his language or customs, like a Highlander, he appears very different from what he really is; he assumes the semblance of dispositions and qualities which are not the most characteristic of his nature; and lest the dear language of his fathers, and superstitions of his earliest days, should be exposed to unhallowed ridicule, he will seem very unconcerned about either. This disposition is natural, and perhaps may be common to all nations that are much separated from foreigners, and that have only advanced to a particular stage of civilization. For though the Irishman has been surrounded during several centuries with strangers, yet jealousy and pride, and injurious treatment have confirmed him in his prejudices and have strengthened his attachment to the characteristics of his own people. This prejudice against the sons of the stranger who have settled in his country, operates much more powerfully in him than in the Highlander of

the present day : and it must be owned, that the latter has always had more justice done him than the former.

Though I have said, that there are two classes of people in Ireland of a different origin, it should be observed, that there are three, if we include the Scots of Ulster, who settled there in the reign of Charles the first and second. They are a sober, industrious, and in general a wealthy people ; proud of the name by which they are designated, and still retaining a hearty dislike to popery and all its adherents. Those counties in which they reside may easily be distinguished by the stranger from the advanced state of their agriculture and manufactures, and from the superior comfort and cleanliness of the inhabitants. In Ulster are to be found the three classes which divide Ireland, the native Irish, or aborigines, the Anglo-Hibernians or English settlers, and the Scots. The first class in this province, consists of servants, sometimes tenants, as in Donegal and Antrim, where they compose the greater part of the population, and in a few instances proprietors ; the second class, or Anglo-Hibernians, belong nearly all to the description of landed gentry ; and the Scots, who are both tenants and proprietors, compose chiefly the manufacturing class. No part of Ireland is

more improved than some parts of Ulster, and there is no part where the influence of religious antipathies and prejudice is more apparent. I have often been astonished to see a man ignorant and vicious, contend as furiously for the meeting-house, or church, or chapel, as if the religion of Christ had been confined to either of these places of worship, and as if he himself had been the most devout and exemplary christian on earth. A religious designation is here the name of a political party, as well as of a religious body ; and it is no unusual thing to meet with a ruffian, who would fight for that sect whose name he bears, whilst he is totally ignorant of the tenets of every sect.

The religious animosities which were strengthened by the atrocities committed by all parties during the civil war which ended with the treaty of Limerick, have always been continued in Ireland. They have been kept alive by parading associations, calling themselves the friends of government, by political depression, by ignorance, superstition, and barbarism. How unfit are men, placed from their infancy in these circumstances, to judge of the character of one another with candour or fairness ! The native Irishman has accordingly seldom met with justice ; his vices have been held forth as unequalled ; his disposition as fero-

cious, and his mental culture hopeless ; whilst the fine qualities which essentially compose his character have been overlooked or caricatured.

There is no mark by which the Irishman (always recollecting that by this I mean the original race of the country,) is more distinguished than *inquisitiveness*. He will walk miles with you to discover where you come from, where are you going, and what is your business ; he will appear merry to make you frank, and perfectly untutored and simple with a design constantly in view. This disposition has been cherished by the recitation of the *sceuldachs*, a species of legendary tales that have been transmitted from time immemorial. Every one is in possession of some of these ; and the recital of them is one of the most favourite pastimes. As there is not one in a thousand of these people who can read, and as their priests do not often condescend to deliver sermons, this may be considered as the principal source of their instruction. And, however extravagant some of these stories may be, they are not altogether useless even in this point of view ; they refer the mind from the present, to the past, and the future ; they sharpen the intellect and furnish it with ideas ; and they tend to excite

and gratify a powerful curiosity. A people possessed of this disposition, though sunk in ignorance and superstition, will nevertheless rise; and though circumstances for a time may repress its ardent impulse, yet their situation cannot be considered as hopeless while that impulse remains.

The tales of the bards and senachies produce a powerful influence on individual character. They begin to make their impression at that period of life, when almost any impressions may be made, and, when once made, can scarcely ever be completely effaced. Besides, the influence which the tale exerts is the more permanent, since the young listeners are generally allied, either by kindred, or tribe, or nation, to the hero, of whose marvellous exploits, or tragic death, it is the history: all the warm and sympathetic affections of the tender mind are thus awakened, and dwell with infinite delight on the fond image which an astonished imagination has formed.

Though there are neither bards nor senachies in polished society, who amuse and instruct by the recitation of their tales and their songs, there are few who have had the advantage of liberal education, who have not felt in early life something analogous to the influence to which I have referred. Even the youth

whilst yet a boy, when reading the simple tale of his favourite hero, performs already, in imagination, the deeds for which he is so much renowned, and longs for the period when the energies of riper years will enable him to rival the glory of the man, who seems to his infant mind to possess little in common with the other beings of his race but the name. If in this way Alexanders and Cæsars be formed, perhaps to be the scourge of their own age, the terror of the world, and the guilty object of unthinking admiration to the people of future times, how pleasing is it to reflect, that in the same manner also are produced Platos, and Bacons, and Newtons, philanthropists, philosophers, and moralists, men who will be the ornament and the source of ever-growing enjoyment to the human kind!

An inquisitive turn of mind is generally accompanied with some degree of thoughtfulness. A Highlander is both inquisitive and thoughtful, so is an Irishman; though I am inclined to think, that he has not got quite so much of the pensive philosopher in his nature. He can much more easily become jocular than a Highlander; nor is he so apt to make those moral reflections on the common incidents of life. The latter has a degree of tender melancholy in his disposition which influences

most of his habits of thinking; whereas the former, though far from being destitute of melancholy, is not subject in the same degree to its controul. It is difficult for me, and perhaps impossible in itself, accurately to draw, on this delicate head, the line of distinction. That there is a difference, however, will be readily admitted, and this may have been partly occasioned by the following circumstances.*

First, there is a vast contrariety in the scenery of the Highlands to that of Ireland. That of the one is wild, and rugged, and sublime, calculated to cherish a deep toned thoughtfulness: that of the other is hilly and beautiful, but not generally bold, and seems less adapted to elevate the imagination, or to increase the tender pensiveness of the heart. In the one case, “the solemn and touching
“ reflection perpetually recurs, of the weakness
“ and insignificance of perishable man, whose
“ generations pass away into oblivion with all
“ their toils and ambition, while nature holds
“ on her unvarying course, and pours out her
“ streams and renews her forests with undecay-
“ ing activity, regardless of the fate of her

* The causes which have operated to produce a difference in the character of the Highlander and native Irish are more fully considered in the following chapter.

“proud and perishable sovereign:” while in the other case the same loftiness of conception is less frequently cherished, the same ardent and pleasing sensibility is perhaps less uniformly excited, the same dark, and mournful, and affecting images do not present themselves. Besides, the Highlander generally passes his life more retired and in a manner much more solitary than the Irishman, and is often left altogether to his own reflections, and to the impressions which a wild and mountain scenery produces.

In Leitrim and in some parts of the county of Donegal, the character of the natives approximates nearer to that of a Highlander, than elsewhere. The scenery of both these counties is wild and romantic.

Secondly, these two characters are placed in very different circumstances in a moral point of view; and it is on this particular that I am disposed to place most stress. The one possesses the advantages of an enlightened education, and of moral and religious instruction, while the other unhappily is in a great measure destitute of both these blessings. Now, it is probable that the difference in the character of the Hibernian and Caledonian, as it regards deep thoughtfulness, is chiefly owing to this differ-

ence in their situation. In poetry, and bards, and music, and in tales of the times of old, they have been, in former ages at least, pretty much on a level : these, therefore, while their influence continued could produce little variation in the national mode of feeling. But when sensibility is under the guidance of moral sentiment, it dignifies the character, it chastens the imagination, and it makes a feeling which originally existed in the same degree in different individuals, appear different only from its being variously modified.

Acuteness and shrewdness are also qualities which strongly mark the Irish character ; and yet these valuable qualities are often concealed by that appearance of simplicity, and that blundering precipitancy which so mightily amuse every stranger. Indeed, these last dispositions seem not very compatible with any extraordinary quickness of apprehension, and might lead one to suppose, were it not for the most undeniable evidence to the contrary, that it really had no existence. But let any one converse with an Irishman on any subject that is not altogether beyond his understanding, and he will find him shrewd though unlettered, and not quite unintelligent, though on most subjects uninformed ; possessing a wonderful facility of comprehension, and an equally singular talent

for acute and original remark. These endowments when found in a person educated and polished, and when allied, as in his case they generally are, with a brilliant playfulness of fancy, produce the happiest effect, and form a character at once pleasing and original.

Strong local attachment forms a very prominent part of this character. The Irishman like the Highlander must often go from home ; he must go in search of that bread which his country denies him, but he can never forget the cottage of his early years : whether in the east or west, though even buried amid the ignorance and vice of St. Giles's, the lovely valley in which he first began to live, and the green hills of his native isle, with all the soft and endearing associations which they awaken, never cease to warm his imagination, nor, to his latest hour, do they depart from his memory. The wild and simple strains which first delighted him in the cabin, while they sooth his sorrows in a foreign clime, cherish his fondness for home, by exciting the tenderest and most delightful sympathies of the human heart. The beautiful language of the poet who sung the pleasures of hope, is as conformable to truth on this head as it is poetical ; and describes the force of the *amor patriæ*, much better than any dissertation on the subject.

There came to the beach a poor exile of Erin ;
 The dew on his thin robe was heavy and chill ;
 For his country he sighed, when at twilight repairing,
 To wander alone by the wind-beaten hill.

“ Sad is my fate !” said the heart-broken stranger

“ The wild deer and wolf to a cover can flee ;

“ But I have no refuge from famine and danger,

“ A home and a country remain not to me.

“ Never again in the green sunny bowers,

“ Where my forefathers lived shall I spend the sweet
 hours !

“ Or cover my harp with wild woven flowers,

“ And strike to the numbers of Erin gu brath.

“ Erin my country ! though sad and forsaken,

“ In dreams I revisit thy sea-beaten shore ;

“ But alas ! in a far foreign land I awaken,

“ And sigh for the friends who can meet me no more !

“ Where is my cabin door, fast by the wild wood ?

“ Sisters and sires did ye weep for its fall ?

“ Where is the mother that looked on my childhood ?

“ And where is the bosom friend, dearer than all ?

“ Yet all its sad recollection suppressing,

“ One dying wish my lone bosom can draw :

“ Erin ! an exile bequeaths thee his blessing !

“ Land of my forefathers, Erin gu brath !

“ Buried and cold when my heart stills her motion,

“ Green be thy fields, sweetest isle of the ocean !

“ And thy harp-striking bards sing aloud with de-
 votion,

“ Erin, mavournin, Erin gu brath !”*

* Erin gu brath, i. e. Ireland for ever.

To some the mild enthusiasm, the ardent love of kindred and of country, expressed in these lines may seem inapplicable to the Irish character. But I can assure such that I have witnessed a considerable share of this even among the low and uneducated part of that people in London. When I spoke to them in their own language, their national enthusiasm was kindled, and for a while they seemed to forget that they were in the land of strangers. And though doomed to ignorance, penury, and toil, at home as well as abroad, yet, so fond are they of their country, and of every thing connected with it, that he who will talk to them in the tongue of their fathers, which they regard as sacred, and who seems not displeased with their customs, will be considered as their countryman and friend. The same strong local attachment, and love to kindred, I have observed, among that part of the population to which I refer in every part of Ireland. When I asked an Hibernian about his country, whether he had any inclination to go to America, where he might have as much land as he chose for potatoes, his answer, however many hardships he actually suffered, generally had the same import with the language of Ulysses.

Low lies our isle, yet blest in fruitful stores,
Strong are her sons, though rocky are her shores;

And none, ah ! none so lovely to my sight,
Of all the lands that heaven o'erspreads with light.

This extreme warmth of affection, this strong attachment to kindred, is very compatible with some degree of turbulence or even ferocity. Of the truth of this remark, the following anecdote affords a beautiful illustration : it is recorded in Leland's History of Ireland, under the reign of Henry the Sixth. O'Connor, the turbulent Irish chieftain of O'Fally, had alarmed the deputy by an inroad into the district of Kildare. He was surprised by Fitz-Eustace, and his troop put to the rout. The chieftain, in endeavouring to escape from his pursuers, fell from his horse ; his son, the companion of his danger, stopped and remounted him ; but unhappily the father fell a second time to the ground. A generous contest was now commenced between the father and son, which of them should be resigned to the mercy of the enemy. The youth urgently pressed his father to take his horse, to leave him to his fate, and to seize the present moment of providing for his own safety. The father obstinately refused ; commanded his son to fly, and was quickly made prisoner.

How much is it to be regretted that a character whose principal constituent is warmth and

tenderness of heart, should not be placed in circumstances more favourable to its happy formation, more conducive to virtue and happiness ! It has seldom had the best opportunity for unfolding to advantage the fine qualities of which it is essentially composed ; it has often been misrepresented, and abused, and persecuted. It cannot, therefore, be deemed surprising that it has many defects, which time, and education, and kind treatment, will remove.

In this short sketch of the character of an Irishman, I cannot omit fidelity to friends as a component part. It is the more necessary to make this remark, since this quality has sometimes been denied him. It has been said, that he is cruel and deceitful to a singular degree ; that it is never safe to place any confidence in him, since he will always betray his friend, to purchase a small advantage to himself. In support of the first part of this charge, viz. his cruelty, we are referred to the religious and bloody wars of former times, and to the shocking murders and robberies committed in the present day. Now, it should be recollected, that religious wars are always cruel ; it is to the disgrace of human nature that they have ever existed ; and as this species of war is really repugnant to reason and common sense, the mind of man seems incapable of waging it without injustice and

cruelty. Besides, a people of ardent feeling, of strong prepossession and attachment, when very ignorant, and at the disposal of priests equally ignorant, but more designing, will be guilty of many atrocities which can never be considered as characteristic of their nature. With this consideration in view, the Irish in carrying on their religious wars, will be found, after candid examination, not to have been worse than their neighbours; especially when we advert to their many provocations. As to the more recent murders, they only prove that there is a larger share of public vice, arising from political and moral causes in their country than in ours; and this no one can deny.

But, it is also said, that the Irish are deceitful; that notwithstanding all their promises, they will betray a friend to serve themselves; and this is held forth as the general character of that people. No opinion can be more contrary to truth. Let them only be convinced, that you are their friend, and they will never forsake you; they will do their utmost to serve you. Were it necessary, I could refer to many instances in support of this assertion.

The truth is, the people of Ireland, (I mean the aborigines,) have for many centuries been placed in peculiar circumstances: they have

been often deceived, often insulted, and often ridiculed. It was natural for them, therefore, to be rather jealous, not to be too ready to place confidence in strangers; and perhaps, occasionally to devise schemes of retaliation. But they have always been sufficiently faithful and steady when confidence has been reposed in them; and they have been singularly kind, and warm-hearted, and faithful, to any one whom they had reason to consider as their friend. For my own part, I have travelled through the greatest part of Ulster, Munster, and Connaught, often in the most retired vallies, and surrounded by people who had not one word of English; when I spoke to them in their own language, they received me with a frankness and hospitality, which assured me of their good will, and removed all doubts as to personal safety. How ardently did I then wish that it were in my power to remove the prejudices that have been entertained against a people so kind and simple hearted!

From fidelity to friends, the transition is easy to hospitality. The hospitality of the Irish, like that of the Scottish highlanders, is proverbial; and never surely has a stranger visited the neighbouring isle, without having had satisfactory proofs of it. The poor labourer, who has only potatoes for himself and his chil-

dren, will give the best in his pot to the guest, from whatever quarter he may come : he bestows his simple fare with a kindness that has often delighted me. Unlike the peasants of some other countries, who frown at the wandering intruder, he seems to feel a real pleasure in giving food to the hungry ; he gives the hearty welcome of his country to all who approach his humble cot,—*ceud mile failte duit*.* At first I thought that this might be the form of salutation, on extraordinary occasions ; but when I found that man, woman, and child, shouted *ceud mile failte duit*, to every visitant, and even to every beggar, I felt rather astonished.

The rites of hospitality among the Irish, as among all the Celtic tribes, as well as among all ancient nations, are deemed sacred. The stranger is treated on all occasions with the utmost attention and respect, with a courtesy and politeness which more elevated society consider as belonging exclusively to themselves. And I must remark, that even the lower order of the original Irish, especially in sequestered situations, are much more distinguished for their attention to strangers than the same order of the Anglo-Hibernians. Among the former, the disposition to oblige, becomes rather officious ; when I asked for the road in their own

* A hundred thousand welcomes.

language, I was escorted perhaps for a mile or two, lest I should go astray ; when I made any inquiry of the latter, if any answer was given, it was sometimes ambiguous, and often not very respectful; I was the more struck with this circumstance, as I have never heard it mentioned by any traveller.

It was deemed infamous among this people, either for the host or the guest to give any information to an enemy of one another. The mutual participation of the feast was by them deemed as the pledge of friendship and of honour: so sacred was this tie considered, that when two gallant youths, of the house of Tirconnel, entered as spies into the hostile camp of a neighbouring chief, and were invited by the guards to share their supper, they courteously declined. “ To accept this invitation, “ was to form a friendship with these men not “ to be violated ; which should prevent them “ from giving any intelligencé, or, if discovered, “ would have rendered their intelligence suspected.”

Before concluding this chapter, I must advert to that susceptibility of gratitude and resentment, so observable in the Irish. They are rather prone to extremes in their prepossessions, or their antipathies, their love or their hatred. They have no idea of the heartless neutrality of

indifference, of the frigid torpor of insensibility ; and it is with difficulty, they can maintain that equanimity of mind, which accords with the happy medium of moderation. They are ardent and high spirited ; and though not so proud as Highlanders, they have got all their impetuosity. No people in the world can be made better friends, and it is not easy to conceive of worse enemies. They have got some vanity, and they may be flattered ; they possess warm affections, and they may very easily be secured ; but they have a degree of resentment that will not suffer them with impunity to be injured or insulted. This character appears to me extremely valuable, since it may be turned to the best account : little can be done in improving a people dull and stupid ; but much may be accomplished with those who are alive to every impression, who are acute, and generous, and ardent.

After all, the character which I have been delineating must be allowed to have many faults. These, however, should, I think, be ascribed to the moral and political circumstances in which the Irish have been placed. The constituent parts of this character are certainly good ; and if under proper direction, would undoubtedly produce the happiest results. That blundering precipitancy which is always con-

nected with it, does not appear to me to be originally a component part. The same habit of making what has been called *bulls*, has been attributed to the Highlanders, though in a less degree. And it is certain, that owing to the dry humour which many of them possess, and their ignorance of the English tongue, they do commit blunders of the most ludicrous nature. The old Irish possess to a much greater extent the same vein of humour, and are equally awkward in speaking the imported dialect. They would naturally, therefore, fall into many blunders, and the habit when once formed so as to become national, was likely enough to be continued. I was confirmed in this opinion when I found, that a native Irishman commits no more blunders than his neighbours, when he speaks in the language which he perfectly understands. His humour, however, in any language, is always inexhaustible, and his “blunders are never blunders of the heart.”

The Irish is so very idiomatic, and possesses so little in common with the other languages of modern Europe, except the Celtic, and at the same time so very figurative, that it is difficult for any one who *thinks in it* not to make *bulls*. It is partly on this account that an unlettered Irishman speaks in glowing and metaphorical diction. It is impossible for him to separate

the language of his early years from his habits of thinking; he, therefore, very naturally accommodates the acquired tongue to the idiomatic construction and phraseology of his own, and imperceptibly enriches it with all the tropes and figures with which his mind is familiar. Besides, as has been already remarked, the Irish have an ardour of mind, and an impetuosity, which hurry them along, and produce that confusion of ideas in which *bulls* chiefly consist. “The propensity to this species of blunder exists in minds, who are quick and enthusiastic, who are confounded by the rapidity and force with which undisciplined multitudes of ideas crowd for utterance. Persons of such intellectual characters are apt to make elisions in speaking, which they trust the capacities of their audience will supply: passing rapidly over a long chain of thought, they sometimes forget the intermediate links, and no one but those of equally rapid habits can follow them successfully.”*

This, by the way, is remarkably characteristic of men of original minds. On all the subjects to which they direct their attention, they will be apt, unless much on their guard, to leave chasms in their reasonings, which, as they think, every reader can supply for himself.

* Edgeworth on Irish Bulls, p. 128.

Such persons feel a propensity to leap from the premises to the conclusion, without putting the intermediate ideas in words : it is not that these ideas do not really present themselves, but they pass through the mind with so much velocity, and appear so simple and obvious, that this detailed process seems unnecessary. “ These are gigantic and stupendous intelligences, who grasp a subject by intuition, and bound forward from one series of conclusions to another, without regular steps through intermediate propositions.” It is to this power of perceiving at a glance all the bearings of a subject, without the labour and time which are required to ordinary minds, that originality of genius is to be ascribed. But to return from this digression.—

It may very naturally be asked, if the habit of making bulls is in whole or in part to be attributed to the idiomatic and figurative construction and phraseology of the Irish language, and to enthusiasm and impetuosity, how comes it to pass that those in Ireland who are altogether unacquainted with that tongue, should be guilty of the same blunders ; and that the Highlanders and the Welsh, who speak dialects of that language, and who will certainly yield to few in ardour of feeling, and precipitancy of ideas, have never been accused of that species

of blundering, which is now associated with the nation and character of their Celtic brethren? Though it be difficult to give a satisfactory answer to this question, the following remarks may not be altogether inapplicable.

First, the Anglo-Hibernians have much of the enthusiasm and humour of the native Irish, and indeed, it appears to me, that by intermarriages, they are a good deal incorporated with each other, though political and religious causes have increased rather than diminished their original animosity.

Secondly, it is certain, that a people when accused of any error are more likely to fall into that error, than if the case had been otherwise. The Irish as a nation are accused of making bulls; and though a colony of English should settle there in the present day, their descendants would naturally be associated with the Hibernian blunderers, and whether guilty or not, would be charged with the *habit* or failing of that humorous race. The truth is, all nations commit blunders; the English, the Highland, and the Welsh, though not all to the same extent, and a very little additional incongruity of idea would convert them into bulls. What is it then that produces this incongruity of ideas? I answer,

Thirdly, an excess of fancy and humour. It

is to this last quality, which is possessed to an unequalled degree, that we are indebted for all the amusement which the good-natured Irishman affords. While, therefore, the Highland-man and the Welsh are possessed of the language of Ireland, they generally want that excessive fund of humour which induces the poor Hibernian to indulge in the utmost merriment and hilarity.

“ By what their good humour is produced, we
“ know not ; but that it exists, we are certain.
“ In Ireland, the countenance and heart expand
“ at the approach of wit and humour ; the
“ poorest labourer forgets his poverty and toil
“ in the pleasure of enjoying a joke. Amongst
“ all classes of the people, provided no malice
“ is obviously meant, none is apprehended.”*

It cannot be supposed, that I should say any thing of the intrepidity and courage of the Irish. This has never been called in question. At this moment they compose a great proportion of our army and navy ; and they justly share the glory that has covered our bold and peerless countrymen.

Such is a general outline of the character of our fellow subjects in the neighbouring isle : a character which though surrounded with some blemishes, will rise into higher beauty and perfection, when its calumniators have no longer

* Edgworth, p. 258.

the power to do harm:—which, when it is brightened from the dark shades, and has acquired that animating lustre to which nature has destined it, will command a much larger share of love and veneration than it has yet obtained. As it is, to give it all the interest to which it has every claim, another pen than mine must describe it. All at which I aim is only to remove prejudice, to correct misrepresentation, and to direct the public attention to a subject which at any time it may not be unpleasing to study, but the consideration of which at present it may be criminal to neglect.

CHAP. III.

THE CHARACTER OF THE IRISH CONTINUED—REMARKS ON THE POETRY AND MUSIC OF THE IRISH—ON THEIR BARDS, SENACHIES, AND HARPERS.

THE subject of this and the following chapter, I once intended to have treated at much greater length ; I shall only at present, however, make such remarks as may seem necessary to illustrate the character and genius of the Irish, and as may tend still more evidently to identify that people with the Highlanders.

To shew from the customs, manners, superstitions, and language, a similarity of origin between these two nations, must at least be amusing. But though this may be a subordinate consideration, it is not my chief object. If it can be shewn that the Highlanders and the Irish are one people ; that their ancient manner, their poetry, music, and superstition, are nearly alike, then it may be asked, what are those circumstances which have formed the

character of the one with so much heroic elevation, so amiable, and so useful, while that of the other has been prevented from arriving at the same moral attainment, from rising to the same popularity and distinction. The Irishman, as well as the Highlander, possesses, with some limitations, “the generous and chivalrous spirit, the self-subdued mind, the warm affection to his family—the fond attachment to his clan—the love of story and of song—the contempt of danger and of luxury—the mystic superstition equally awful and tender.” Some of these qualities, perhaps, he possesses in an inferior degree: still it must be allowed that his mind is equally susceptible, and tender, and generous, and he only requires to be placed in circumstances favourable to moral improvement. in order to exhibit the same lovely picture, of simplicity and innocence, of affection and fidelity, that may be seen in the glens and recesses of the north.

Campion, with all the prejudices of an Englishman of the sixteenth century, confirms this view of the Irish character, if, indeed, any confirmation be necessary, on a point so obvious though not generally understood. “The people are thus inclined: religious, frank, amorous, ireful, sufferable of pains infinite, very glorious, delighted with wars, great alms givers, passing

“ in hospitality. The same being virtuously
“ bred up or reformed, are such mirrors of holi-
“ ness and austerity, that other nations retain
“ but a shadow or shew of devotion in compa-
“ rison of them.”*

The same author mentions a circumstance respecting the extreme and even brutish ignorance of the Irish, which, I am persuaded, when properly explained will support no such conclusion. For, though it is admitted, that they are ignorant on moral and religious subjects, I am unwilling to allow that they have been at any time so ignorant, as not to know the guilt of homicide. They, indeed, as well as the Highlanders, deemed it lawful to take the life of any connected with another clan or sept in open combat ; and all nations engaged in war, entertain similar sentiments ; but the *assassin* seems always to have been viewed by them with abhorrence.

“ I found a fragment of an epistle (says Cam-
“ pion) wherein a virtuous monk declareth that
“ to him, travelling in Ulster, came a grave gen-
“ tleman about Easter, desirous to be confessed
“ and howseled, who in all his life time had never
“ yet received the blessed sacrament. When he
“ had said his mind, the priest demanded him

* *Campion's History of Ireland*, p. 19.

“whether he were faultless in the sin of homicide?
“He answered that he never wist the matter to
“be heinous before, but being instructed thereof,
“he confessed the murder of five, the rest he
“left wounded, so as he knew not whether they
“lived or no. Then was he taught that both
“the one and the other was execrable, and
“very meekly humbled himself to repent-
“ance.” I mention this anecdote, because
it seems to accord with the opinions which
for a long time have prevailed respecting the
native Irish; and because a stranger to the
Celtic tribes will be disposed to draw a con-
clusion from it unfavourable to the character of
that people, which the circumstances to which
it refers will by no means support.

It is well known that no people in the world
were more averse to homicide than the High-
landers. Even the professed thieves of the
mountains, were degraded in their own estima-
tion, and shunned by their fellow plunderers, if
they killed a human being otherwise than in fair
combat: though the Highlanders, it must be
confessed, in certain cases, *if commissioned by
their chief*, blindly executed vengeance in secret
on the sons of the strangers; not, indeed, when
they came as guests, but when they were known
to be the avowed enemies of their country or
their clan. Such instances, however, were ex-

tremely rare ; since it was always deemed disgraceful to the warrior, not to command his enemy to “ draw and defend his life.”

Similar sentiments prevailed on this subject in Ireland. Indeed, we cannot suppose that a people whose nature is characterised by a tender enthusiasm, by warm and social affections, and who like “ the men of Athens are in “ all things too superstitious,”* should be that blood-thirsty race, at least originally, which they have been represented. The virtues of impulse, for which they are distinguished when not fully under the controul of reason, may often terminate in ungovernable ferocity ; this unhappy result must always be accidental, and can never be the effect of settled principle.

But though I thus maintain that the Irish character is equally warm and benevolent with the Highland, and, like it, that it possesses the elements of all that is endearing or sublime in human nature, yet, the moral texture of the former, it must be acknowledged, has, by certain circumstances, been differently modified from the latter. To some of these I have already alluded ; it may not be here improper to take a more enlarged and connected view of this subject. Perhaps there is not a

* That is, much given to devotion.

more amusing, and there scarcely can be a more useful speculation, than that of tracing the causes which have occasioned in a people originally the same, possessing the same genius, and language, and customs, and superstitions, any difference of moral complexion. Such an investigation has, at least, the tendency of shewing us the vast influence which popular opinions and accidental circumstances exert in the formation of character.

In the first place, I remark, that the endless divisions and feuds, occasioned by the Brehon law of Tanistry,* operated most unfavourably on the Irish character. It is true, there were divisions and animosities among the Highland clans, but they were of a very different description. While they waged war against their enemies, their affection to their chief, who was “ the first in their battles and “ the wisest in their councils,” and to that large family of which he was the head, was by this circumstance increased rather than diminished. There is not perhaps an instance on record in which a clan was divided against itself, and in which the claims of aspiring rivals produced a disunion in the tribe to which they belonged. They loved one another therefore intensely,

* See the chapter on the progress of English law, &c. and also note A.

not merely because their hearts were warm, but because their affections were circumscribed by barriers, stable as the mountains with which they were surrounded.

The reverse of this was the case in Ireland: according to the custom to which I have alluded, a chief was succeeded in his authority and in his estate by the person who was deemed best qualified for discharging his duty, of the sept of which he was head, whether he were a son, or an uncle, or a cousin, or only connected by those ordinary ties of kindred which united all the members of the clan. This practice evidently had its origin in times of great turbulence, when it was of the first importance for the clan to have a leader in whose wisdom and courage they might place the utmost confidence. It was attended, however, with the most unhappy effects; it divided a clan into parties; each division had recourse to arms to support its favourite chief; both contended with the implacable rancour and ferocity which seem inseparable from civil war; and the moral character was finally injured by the circumstances of aggravation which accompanied the combat. The people were thus accustomed not merely to witness scenes of carnage and of blood, but to mingle in such scenes when their brethren and their friends

were the sufferers, and, consequently, to have the finer susceptibilities of their nature perverted or destroyed.

Every one knows the deleterious influence which civil war exerts on national character. In some instances, indeed, the atrocities committed in such circumstances are the effect of a previous state of barbarism and gross depravity in the multitude ; but in every case, they tend to weaken the moral feelings, and to deaden the virtuous emotions of the heart. In Ireland, the clans not only contended with one another and with the English, or as they call them the *Gall*,* but almost as often as there was a new chief every clan was divided against itself. This was a civil war in its worst form. To expect that in such circumstances the people should retain their original purity and moral loveliness, were to look for an impossibility.

In the second place ; there has been a much closer connection, during the last two or three centuries, at least, between the higher and lower orders in the Highlands than in Ireland. In the former country, the hall of the chieftain was ever open to receive his clan ; they appeared before their lord, not with the spirit of servility, but with that of unsuspecting confi-

* That is, strangers.

dence, of mingled attachment and veneration : they heard the same bards recite the praises of departed heroes ; the same mournful and inspiring melody ; and they were accustomed to think, that their fame also would produce the same glorious emulation in the sons of future times. Their manners were polished, and the tone of their moral feeling elevated and improved, by their frequent and endearing intercourse with the only person in the world whose authority to them was paramount, and whose wealth, and rank, and military prowess were thought to confer distinction on the meanest of the clan. It is impossible that people placed in such circumstances, and feeling the influence of such sentiments, should not have arrived at a superior degree of moral attainment, should not have been impelled by a noble enthusiasm to the exercise of every manly virtue, to heroism, and glory.

Besides, it should be recollected, that this state of things was very general in the Highlands so late as the year 1745 : so that the inhabitants have not only had the advantage of their original circumstances till this recent period, but have had also the important privilege of receiving religious instruction in their own language. Thus, when the period

arrived in which the race of the bards became extinct, in which the chieftains were to relinquish their patriarchal and peculiar character, and to assume that which is common to the possessors of equal rank and fortune throughout the empire ; in which the dark, and melancholy, and sublime superstitions of the mountains, was to be confined within narrower limits, and to have its influence on the imagination and the heart diminished, the mild and purifying religion of the gospel shone with a brighter lustre, and the knowledge of the cross afforded a principle to excite and perpetuate the noble and moral enthusiasm of the Highland mind.

It is almost unnecessary to say how different from all this was the case in Ireland. In that country the number of the native chieftains, in consequence of the endless hostilities in which the English involved them, was, during some centuries, gradually diminishing ; various rebellions furnished the occasion of immense forfeitures ; and the fatal ambition of Tyrone, and the civil wars of Cromwell, nearly completed their total extirpation. Most of the Irish clans were now as sheep without a shepherd. The halls in which they were accustomed to assemble, in which they had heard the music of the

harp, and the song of the bards, and which once contained the object of their delight and veneration, was now in the possession of strangers ;— of strangers, whose language, and customs, and prejudices, were different from their own, and to whom they entertained an avowed dislike. Every morning that the Irishman opened his eyes on the castle of his chief, his feelings of regret for its departed glory, for the loss of his protector and friend were renewed, and he mourned in secret the conquest of his country, and the ruin of his people. Even the bards, most of whose patrons were now disinherited, or in exile, heightened by their mournful and desponding strains, the anguish of his woe, while they recalled to his recollections the tender and moving associations of other years, and sung the melting melody of “ Erin gu bra.”* The excess of his grief, and the sensibility of his nature, only tended to increase his aversion to a power whose authority in Ireland he conceived was usurped, and whose coercive measures towards his chieftain and his clan seemed the most galling oppression. He could feel

* This favourite Irish air is very old. It is often sung in Connaught by natives who have no English. It has the same effect on their feelings that Mac Gregor O’Ruara, or Lochaber no-more has, on a Highlander. See note B.

no attachment, therefore, to the English adventurer who had taken possession of the lands from which his lord had been expelled ; on the other hand, he must have cherished a disposition to injure his person and acquired property, and to frustrate, by every possible means, even at the expence of his own virt  , the happiness of the intruder.

The feelings of hatred and contempt which the new proprietors entertained towards the native Irish were equally strong. They considered them not merely as a wild and savage race, to whose bards, and music, and manners, and customs, they expressed the utmost aversion, but as a conquered people, over whom the fortunes of war had given the English nation an absolute power.* In such circumstances it was not possible that either the Anglo-Hibernian or the native Irishman should be much improved : they mutually disliked and suspected one another. The latter, from principle, became often faithless to a foreigner, by whom he was treated, not with the generous frankness of his former lord, but with insolence and contempt ; and those qualities of deceit and infidelity which arose out of the circumstance in which

* Spencer's View of Ireland.

he was placed, have been afterwards by strangers considered as forming a part of his natural character. The influence of this unfavourable situation, and of the sentiments of suspicion, and hatred, and revenge, to which it gave rise, operating for ages, must necessarily have been extremely injurious to the moral feelings. This consideration of itself seems sufficient to account for that perceptible difference between the moral complexion of the Highlanders and the Irish.

It is unnecessary to say, that the inferior orders have a tendency to descend in the scale of intellectual and moral beings, when all friendly intercourse with their superiors has ceased. It is difficult if not impossible afterwards to attain any great elevation of sentiment, or polish of manners. If this remark holds true in all ordinary cases, it is especially so in situations where the multitude are viewed by their superiors in the light of a conquered people, and treated accordingly with the scornful indignity of illiberal prejudice. If they are considered as degraded by those whom they are sufficiently prone to respect, unless irritated and oppressed, it is very probable that they will imperceptibly think of themselves in a somewhat similar light. And when this unhappy result takes place, it is superfluous

to say, that the influence of even such a conception must have a debasing tendency on the whole character : For,

Jove fix'd it certain, that whatever day
Makes man a slave, takes half his worth away.*

These observations, together with those which have been elsewhere made, will account for that prejudice which the native Irish entertain towards the English character. I am fully aware that this is a delicate subject, and am anxious, therefore, to treat it with all possible tenderness. The fact, however, is certain : and no one can enter into the cabin of an Irishman, and converse with him familiarly in his own language, without perceiving his strong dislike to the persons and religion of the *Gall*.† He remembers that his country has been invaded, and conceives that the chiefs of his people have

* Odyss. xvii.

† It is singular that Scotchmen are never distinguished by this appellation. The Irish call them *Albanaich*. On entering a cabin the first salutation was “ *Ceudmìle failte duit* ;” that is, *a hundred thousand welcomes*. After this the first question proposed was “ *Cia as duit* ?” That is, *where do you come from*. Of course my answer was, “ *as Albainn* ;” *from Albion or Scotland*. This information respecting my country seemed, except in one or two instances, to prepossess the natives in my favor rather than otherwise.

been oppressed and extirpated by the English. He still points to the ruins of a castle which was once the habitation of his own prince of the Milesian race,—a prince to whom he himself is nearly allied, and with a sigh recounts the years that have passed since its walls were demolished by the hands of strangers.

In mentioning this circumstance, I am far, indeed, from wishing to excite prejudice against a people possessing so many amiable and interesting qualities. My object is to shew, that they have been treated in a way, not to conciliate their affections, not to flatter their national prejudices, but in a manner calculated rather to excite their antipathy, and to perpetuate the recollection of former grievances. No people can long retain a dislike to a government by which they are regarded with confidence. To place no trust in a people, is often an effectual way to make them unworthy of trust. And when the Irish find that they are no longer aliens in the land of their fathers, they will be amongst the most faithful subjects in the British empire.

It may be objected to the truth of these remarks, that the native Irish, during two rebellions in Scotland, continued firm in their allegiance to their sovereign; and that in the rebellion of 1798, they were among the best subjects

in Ireland. These facts certainly prove the excellency of their dispositions, and their unwillingness to resist or overturn the established government. I am far from wishing to insinuate any thing to the contrary of this. But it is surely very possible for a people to refrain from open hostilities against the government of their country, nay, to abhor the idea of forcibly opposing its measures, and, at the same time, to feel rather cold in its support. These historical facts, so honourable to the Irish character, sufficiently demonstrate, what all will readily admit, that it is very possible to make the Irish people become the best of all subjects ; while they also shew that the catholics of Ireland, who, as some suppose, should never be trusted, may be managed with the greatest facility, and may be rendered firm friends to the British constitution.

In the third place, the example of the English, during several centuries, had a tendency to corrupt and debase the character of the Irish. The Highlanders had no other example to imitate than that of their chieftain, and the dependents who formed his court ; unless, indeed, we refer to those bright patterns of glorious heroism which the songs of the bards continually impressed on their mind.* Surrounded by the

* See a subsequent part of this chapter.

bulwarks of their native hills, they lived in careless independence, and scarcely ever saw *Clann nan Gall*,* whom they despised, except when they descended from them for the richer booty of the plains.

The condition of the Irish was very different. They, since the period in which their country was first invaded by the English, became subject to the perpetual annoyance of enemies, by whom they were viewed as an inferior order of beings, and by whom, therefore, they were treated with injustice and cruelty. They soon learned to exercise the same ferocity on a people by whom they were slain with impunity, at least, who paid a very inconsiderable fine as the price of their life. They adopted a mode of reasoning certainly not illogical, and which seems to have been followed by most other nations in their circumstances. They were oppressed and plundered by a band of adventurers, who rendered their superiority in military skill only subservient to the destruction of an incensing people; they naturally concluded, therefore, that every means by which they could extirpate such tyrants, or by which they could inflict that justice which their crimes had merited, and for which the English laws made no provision.†

* The sons of the Strangers.

† See a subsequent chapter.

was not only lawful, but highly patriotic and expedient. Hence their judgment and feelings were in some degree perverted; hence the shocking atrocities and violations of solemn engagements with which, towards their enemies, they have been chargeable; and hence the ferocity which their character must necessarily have assumed, from the perpetual scenes of carnage and of blood, of murder and of perfidy, in which they were involved.

Whatever may have been the character of the Irish previous to the conquest of Ireland by Henry II. it is very probable, that it was similar to that of the Highlander of the same period. As to the moral changes that have taken place since, the English must bear no inconsiderable share of the blame. For allowing that the colony of that nation which settled in Ireland, were more civilized than the natives of the country of which they took possession, still, the animosities which they awakened, and the examples of cruelty, rapaciousness, and unprincipled ambition which their conduct exhibited, had a tendency to extinguish even those virtues, to which, in most situations, the savage and barbarian may fairly lay claim. Indeed, civilization, as the term is usually employed, has often, by its vices, and the superior power which it affords, of doing evil as well as doing

good, rendered barbarians still more barbarous, and the inhabitants of the wilderness and the wood still more savage and degraded. In the present case, whatever may be thought of the comparative civilization either of the English or the Irish, at the period to which I refer ; no doubt can be entertained of the pernicious effects which their mutual hostilities, and massacres, continued for so long a time, produced on their moral character.

These effects, for very obvious reasons, have been more permanent in their operation, among the native Irish, than on the Anglo-Hibernians. The latter, by education, by the progress of knowledge and civilization, and by their acquaintance with the language of Britain, have, of course, largely participated in that advancing improvement and moral elevation by which Britain is distinguished ; while the former have laboured under many disadvantages, have been secluded by their language, their antipathies, and their religion, from the benign influence of the same salutary circumstances, and have been prevented by the singularly unfortunate peculiarities of their situation from relinquishing those parts of their character that are merely adventitious, and from fully developing those more amiable features that are truly natural.

In the fourth place, the national poetry of

the Irish, about three centuries ago, seems to have undergone a considerable change for the worse; which incident, though of itself it may appear trivial, becomes important when it is connected with other circumstances; and especially when it is considered, that the national poetry of the Celtic tribes had a vast influence on their habits of thinking and action.

To those who are in general acquainted with the customs of these tribes, it is unnecessary to say, that the order of the bards was held by them in the highest veneration,—that it was liberally supported by every chieftain; and that its influence, because it was intellectual, in many instances was superior to that of the chief himself. Their soft or sublime effusions, which powerfully touched the passions, while they made the heart of the fiercest warrior glow with emotions of tenderness and love, or animated and roused with resistless energy to the combat, were regarded not merely as the inspirations of genius, but as the still loftier conceptions of beings whose minds were under the peculiar impulse of superior power. And who, indeed, *in their situation*, indulging the same enthusiasm, confined to the same pleasing but mournful images of the past, and dwelling on the same fair and beautiful visions of the future, while enjoying the delightful rapture,

the ethereal pleasure, which the combined power of music and poetry creates, could allow himself to think, that the song of the poet, which is not only the source of soft and dissolving joy, but of noble and heroic exertion, should not owe its origin to that invisible power, whose influence seemed to hallow and animate the mind of the bard ?

The bard of fame,
Taught by the gods to please, when high he sings
The vocal lay responsive to the strings.

There is no country in which poetry and music were held in higher estimation, or cultivated to a greater extent, than in Ireland. After ages had elapsed in hostilities with the English, the same ardent love of song continued among the people of this country. “ There is
“ among the Irish,” says Spencer, “ a certain
“ kind of people called bards, which are to
“ them instead of poets, whose profession is
“ to set forth the praises or dispraises of men
“ in their poems or rithmes ; the which are had in
“ so high regard and estimation amongst them,
“ that none dare displease them, for fear to run
“ into reproach through their offence, and to be
“ made infamous in the mouths of all men. For
“ their verses are taken up with a general ap-
“ plause, and usually sung at all feasts and
“ meetings. I have caused divers of these poems

“ to be translated to me, that I might under-
“ stand them, and surely they savoured of
“ sweet wit and good invention ; but skilled
“ not of the goodly ornaments of poetry : yet
“ were they sprinkled with some pretty flowers
“ of their natural device, which gave good
“ grace and comeliness unto them.”

There can be no doubt, that the ancient poetry of the Irish was similar in its general character to that of the Highlanders. The few fragments which remain possess the same pathos and sublimity of sentiment. But it must be acknowledged, that the number of such fragments is indeed small : not that the quantity of Irish poetry is scanty ; for of this commodity there exists a very great abundance.* It is of the lofty and polished strains of poetry, that there is a scarcity, which may, no doubt, be accounted for in various ways, but chiefly by that important revolution which the circumstances, and sentiments, and songs of the bards experienced in the twelfth, and especially in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Soon after the first of these periods, the taste for the marvellous prevailed : the chaste and beautiful tales of the times of old began to be interlarded with stories of giants, and saints, and miracles ;

* See note B.

and the elegant simplicity which seems to have characterized the muse of earlier days, was greatly lost* amid the incoherence of extravagant fiction, Perhaps there may be some truth in Percy's remark as to the origin of this wretched taste: "that after letters began to prevail, " and history assumed a more stable form, by " being committed to plain simple prose, the " songs of the scalds or bards began to be more " amusing than useful. And in proportion as it " became their business chiefly to entertain and " delight, they gave more and more into embellishment, and set off their recitals with such " marvellous fictions, as were calculated to " captivate gross and ignorant minds."†

This remark evidently implies that the only minds which the bards had in their power to captivate by their tuneful art were gross and ignorant. This general position as it regards some countries might be disputed; but it is perfectly just as it respects Ireland subsequent to the sixteenth century. After this period, when the native chieftains were nearly extirpated, the bards were obliged to accommodate their songs to the taste of the multitude, on whom they became dependent for subsistence. This very multitude daily became more

* Walker's Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards.

† Essay on Anc. metric Romances. Reliques, v. 2.

gross in their conceptions, in consequence of the circumstances to which I have already alluded; and the taste of those poets, of whom they were the only patrons, must of course have been gradually debased. Besides, both poets and people, when they were deprived of their own native lords, and hated and persecuted by the English, were resigned into the government of priests, whose ignorance and intolerance, and total want of elevation of mind, or refinement of taste, consummated that state of degradation into which they had already fallen. This circumstance ought to be particularly remarked, since it forms a new era in the history of the Irish nation. If it did not occasion a total change in the genius of the national poetry, it completed a change which had formerly been begun; and in the progress of this revolution, it was impossible that the feelings, and sentiments, and character of the people should have escaped the influence of deterioration. They were placed in a new climate, where the sky was cloudy, where the air was noxious, and where a constitution, which otherwise was good, became sickly.

That nation must indeed be fallen, or it must have been always low in the scale of moral and intellectual attainment, in which a superstitious

priesthood bears the sole authority. While there is not a surer criterion of the degradation of human nature, there certainly does not exist a more powerful barrier to its general improvement. And in place of saying with Dr. Adam Smith that a nation is poor in proportion as the church is rich, I should say, that it is poor in all the noble qualities of mind, in proportion as an ignorant and superstitious tribe of ecclesiastics have the interests and power of a nation under their controul.

Yet such are the circumstances in which the native people and poets of Ireland were placed at the period to which I refer. The bards, whose genius in other times was consecrated to the ennobling task of celebrating the praises of heroes, of forming and elevating the virtues of the living by applauding those of the dead, having now scarcely any other patrons than the multitude and the priests, were employed in praising the power of the pope, the miracles and goodness of ambiguous saints, and the wonders of St. Patrick's Purgatory; subjects worthy of the debased taste of such wretched patrons. To this remark, there may, indeed, have been some glorious exceptions, who, though they partly conformed to the times in which they lived, often thought and composed as if their destiny had been placed in happier ages :

but the number of such minds was small, compared to the crowds, whose intellectual powers, superstition had impaired and degraded. If, then, national poetry has any influence on the formation of character, and that it has there can be no doubt, its power in the present instance could have no salutary tendency, at least, no very salutary tendency in a moral point of view. As it regarded the intellectual powers, though far inferior to the songs of other times, it was not useless. "Whatever," says Dr. Johnson, "withdraws us from the power of
"our senses ; whatever makes the past, the
"distant, or the future, predominate over the
"present, advances us in the dignity of think-
"ing beings."* The poetry and *sceuldachs* of even those degenerate times had this happy effect ; and as has been shewn in the former chapter, they awakened the curiosity, and preserved it from sinking into that total inactivity of mind which naturally results from the melancholy stillness of despotism, and which, while it continues, renders amelioration, either in the savage of the wood, or in the vassal of the tyrant, hopeless. Viewed in this light, the quibbles of the schoolmen, and the trifling disputations

* Johnson's Tour to the Hebrides.

of a Thomas, and a Scotus, have not been without their use.

But there is another circumstance, besides those already mentioned, which must have contributed to produce a change in the character of the national poetry, as well as those injurious effects which this change has occasioned. Under the reign of Elizabeth, laws were enacted against the order of the bards :* some of these it is thought fled to the Western Isles. Those that remained in their own country were of course still more indignant than their ancestors, against that government which made them the objects of persecution. And though the laws were not very strictly put in execution, yet their very existence tended to kindle into madness, the hatred of men whose order had for centuries been inveterate in their hostility to the English. This aversion was expressed by invectives on the meanness, and cruelty, and avarice of the *Gall*; on the inglorious conduct of their countrymen who had submitted to their enthralling yoke; and by celebrating the intrepidity and patriotism of those daring individuals, whose firm resistance to the power that overwhelmed them, as well as the fatal necessity by which that resistance was

* See note C.

occasioned, seemed fully to sanction the sanguinary means by which this power was withstood.*

Hence we can easily account for the view which Spencer gives of the pernicious influence of the bards in raising rebellion against the English government, and in extolling the valiant deeds of outlaws and robbers. “ These Irish
 “ bards are for the most part so far from in-
 “ structing young men in moral discipline, that
 “ they themselves do more deserve to be sharply
 “ disciplined : for they seldom use to choose
 “ unto themselves the doings of good men for
 “ the arguments of their poems; but whomsoever
 “ they found to be most licentious of life, most
 “ bold and lawless in his doings, most dange-
 “ rous and desperate in all parts of disobedience
 “ and rebellious disposition : him they set up
 “ and glorify in their rithms, him they praise
 “ to the people, and to young men make an
 “ example to follow.”—Thus “ evil things
 “ being decked and attired with the gay attire
 “ of goodly words, may easily deceive and
 “ carry away the affection of a young mind that
 “ is not well stayed, but desirous by some bold
 “ adventures, to make proof of himself. For
 “ being (as they all be) brought up idly, without

* See note D.

“ awe of parents, without precepts of masters,
“ and without fear of offence, not being directed
“ nor employed in any course of life which
“ may carry them to virtue; will easily be
“ drawn to follow such as any shall set before
“ them; for a young mind cannot rest: if he
“ be not still busied in some goodness, he will
“ find him such business, as shall soon busy
“ all about him. In which, if he shall find any
“ to praise him, and to give encouragement as
“ those bards and rithmers do for little reward,
“ or a share of a stolen cow, then waxeth he
“ most insolent and half mad with the love of
“ himself, and his own lewd deeds. And
“ as for words to set forth such lewdness, it
“ is not hard for them to give a goodly and
“ painted shew there unto, borrowed even from
“ the praises which are proper to virtue itself:
“ as of a most notorious thief and outlaw,
“ which had lived all his life-time upon spoils
“ and robberies, one of their bards in his praise
“ will say, that he was not one of the idle
“ milk-sops that was brought up by the fire-
“ side; and that most of his days he spent in
“ arms and valiant enterprises: that he did
“ never eat his meat, before he had won it
“ with the sword: that he lay not all night
“ slugging in a cabin under his mantle; but
“ used commonly to keep others waking to de-

“ fend their lives ; and did light his candle at
“ the flames of their houses, to lead him in the
“ darkness : that the day was his night, and
“ the night his day : that he loved not to be
“ long wooing of wenches to yield to him ; but
“ where he came he took by force the spoils of
“ other men’s love, and left but lamentation to
“ their lovers : that his music was not the harp,
“ nor lays of love, but the cries of people and
“ clashing of armour : and finally, that he died,
“ not bewailed of many, but made many
“ wail when he died, that dearly bought his
“ death.”*

The persons whom Spencer here mentions as
“ desperate in all parts of disobedience and
“ rebellious disposition” were no doubt those
who gloried in resisting the English govern-
ment. It is highly probable, however, that in the
progress of time the whole of his description
may have been literally verified ; and that the
mere disturbers of the peace, the banditti of the
woods and mountains, assumed that praise which
is the legitimate reward of patriotism and virtue.
This is the more probable since the plunderers
of every description, while they confined their at-
tacks to the Gall, or Saxons, were rather popular
than otherwise with their countrymen, and re-

* Spencer’s View of Ireland.

garded by the few poets, or rather rhymers, who outlived the storm, with feelings of pleasure and admiration. It is easy to perceive the effect which such a state of society would produce on the general character and moral complexion of the people. Accustomed to obtain fame, from those in whose power it was to immortalize in song, for carrying spoil from their neighbours, and for burning the hamlets in which they dwelt, they would soon learn to consider the character of a general robber as heroic and honourable. Hence it happens that at the present day, the inferior orders of the Irish often amuse themselves with the adventures of noted robbers, whom they admire as men of superior spirit, incapable of spending their lives in inglorious repose. All the inhabitants of the cabin may be seen anxiously listening to the tale of wonder; and if human beings are fond of imitating what they have early admired, it is unnecessary to say, that such amusements may be attended with dangerous results.

Such is a short sketch of the nature of that change which the poetry of Ireland has undergone; of some of the causes by which this change has been produced; and of the influence which the revolution may have had in the formation of national character. Let us now inquire how far the modern history of Highland

poetry and bards, corresponds with that which has now been given. It will be found to differ in the most essential particulars.

Till the year 1745, there was very little change in the customs or superstitions of the Highlanders. Before this period, few strangers ever settled among them. The chiefs, it is true, often made war on one another, but their families were scarcely ever extirpated. The bards were not, therefore, deprived of their patrons; nor was the beautiful poetry of their ancestors exchanged for the legendary tales of the saints: this continued to be recited with the enthusiasm and effect of former ages. Besides, the inhabitants of the Highlands were never totally committed to the government of priests; they yielded an unlimited obedience to their lords; and both their chieftains and themselves were very much regulated in their taste and conduct, by the inspiring song of the bards.

Happily the government of Scotland, though often opposed, was never considered by them as imposed or illegitimate. The lowlanders, indeed, they despised as a mean degenerate race, from whom they were ever ready to carry off booty; but the kings who reigned over that people as well as themselves, so far as they knew any thing concerning them, they regarded as their countrymen and friends. Their attach-

ment to this race of princes, was evinced by the opposition which some of the chiefs made to the government of William, and was still more manifest in the year 1715 and 1745. This feeling of regard, which both priests and poets entertained in common with the people, deprived them at the same time of an opportunity of declaiming against the Scottish government, and of confirming the multitude in inveterate hostility to its yoke, while it ultimately facilitated the necessary change of transferring their allegiance from the House of Stuart to that of Hanover.

But it is not only from the history of the Highlands, I infer that the general character of its poetry remained unchanged till a very recent period, and that the taste of its inhabitants continued to derive advantage from its constant recitation; the same conclusion may be drawn from the actual reliques of Gaelic poetry. It is true, indeed, there is a very considerable difference between the ancient and modern compositions even in the Highlands : perhaps it may be said, that the one surpasses the other in all the higher and more exquisite beauties of poetry, nearly as much as Milton excels the less distinguished of the English bards; but there is one quality common to both, though not always in an equal degree; their tendency to excite

pure and tender emotions, to strengthen those associations that are favourable to individual and social virtue, and to give full effect to those feelings, so dear to the heart of a Highlander, that make

The loud torrent, and the whirlwind's roar,
But bind him to his native mountains more.

Besides, in the Gaelic poetry there is scarcely ever, even in the most modern and inferior species of it, any allusion to witches, or saints, or giants, or miracles : there are, indeed, a few poems of this description, but from their extreme similarity to modern Irish poetry, it is not difficult to trace their origin. Many of the *sgeul-dachs* or tales abound in the marvellous ; especially in those parts of Argyleshire which are near Ireland. The bards sung of themes more suited to the taste of their patrons, of warriors and hapless lovers, of the bloody combat of contending clans, or the mournful destiny of the maid who mourns in secret the early fall of “ the dweller of her secret soul.”

The very superstition of the Highlands, though dark and sublime, had the best moral tendency : it was the superstition, not of an illiberal and debasing fanaticism, but of a warm hearted and affectionate people, exercising the kindest sympathies of human nature,

while secluded by their mountains from the rest of mankind*. It was so closely associated with their poetry and tales, that the frequent recitation of these rendered it familiar to all their conceptions—All the moral advantages which this pleasing superstition and poetry combined were calculated to afford, have been *fully* enjoyed by the Highlanders till a very late period: the songs of other times, which the bards and heroes of other ages had heard and sung, and which must ever possess charms for the dullest ear, have been repeated with the fondest admiration, in the hall and in the cottage, not many years ago; so that the effects, in the bold and intrepid spirit, in the urbanity of manners, and purity of character for which this people are distinguished, are still very manifest. Indeed, to listen to the recitation of such poetry with pleasure, is not only an exercise highly improving, but forms no inconsiderable proof of important improvement having already been made; just as it is the indication of some refinement of taste, and vigour of thought, fully to relish the beauties of the higher order of the English bards.

“ It is difficult to say, to what a degree, in

* See Mrs. Grant's Work on the Superstitions of the Highlanders.

“ the earlier periods of society, the rude com-
“ positions of the bard and the minstrel, may
“ have been instrumental in humanizing the
“ minds of savage warriors, and in accele-
“ rating the growth of cultivated manners.
“ Among the Scandinavians and the Celtæ we
“ know that this order of men was held in
“ very peculiar veneration ; and, accordingly
“ it would appear, from the monuments which
“ remain of these nations, that they were dis-
“ tinguished by a delicacy in the passion of
“ love, and by a humanity and generosity to
“ the vanquished in war, which seldom appear
“ among barbarous tribes ; and with which it
“ is hardly possible to conceive how men
“ in such a state of society could have been
“ inspired, but by a separate class of indivi-
“ duals in the community, who devoted
“ themselves to the pacific profession of
“ poetry, and to the cultivation of that crea-
“ tive power of the mind, which anticipates
“ the course of human affairs, and presents,
“ in prophetic vision, to the poet and the phi-
“ losopher, the blessings which accompany
“ the progress of reason and refinement.”*

These remarks on the national poetry of the
Highlanders and Irish, may partly account

* Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Hum.
Mind, p. 532.

for the difference which exists in the character of the people. It is indeed more singular that the latter possess so many qualities in common with the former, than that they possess so few : deprived in a great measure of their bards and their chieftains, and, in consequence of the circumstances in which they have been placed, deprived also, of a great portion of that truly beautiful poetry which made the bards the ministers of good ;—left to the bigotry, and ignorance, and intolerance of priests, who darkened their understandings, and perverted their feelings, and who conceived it their interest to close the volume of inspiration and conceal the counsel of heaven ;—in such a situation, and with such guides, despised as savage and ungovernable by those whose policy contributed to make them so, a people who once sent forth the ministers of religion to enlighten the darkness of Europe*, have fatally embraced false views of morality, and with these have become the dupes of a fanatical superstition.

Heavens ! how unlike their — sires of old !

It would be improper on this subject not to advert, though it should be at the risk of incurring the charge of unnecessary and tiresome repetition, to the political depression of

* See Bede.

the Irish. This circumstance, though it is the last which I shall mention, as producing a difference between the character of the Highlanders and the Irish, is by no means least in importance. Nor should it be overlooked, since it affords a memorable proof of the influence which depression exerts on the dispositions and manners of a people ; and clearly demonstrates, that even brethren may be so changed in some of the leading features of their character, by the moral and political circumstances in which they are placed, as to make it questionable whether they have sprung from the same origin. Indeed, it may be considered as an incontrovertible maxim, supported by the history of all nations, that every circumstance which divests any part of the community of respectability, either in their own estimation or in that of their fellow citizens, is injurious to their moral interests. This, in some instances, may be necessary, but it is in all cases an *evil*—and an evil of very considerable magnitude. Its unhappy influence on the Irish character has been considered in the remarks on the tendency of the penal laws.

CHAP. IV.

ON THE IRISH LANGUAGE.

A VERY few remarks only can be offered on this subject, since its full consideration does not coincide with the object of this work.

The Irish language is a dialect of what has been generally called the Celtic: and some antiquarians of note have maintained that it is the root of that ancient and venerable tongue. It is certain, that there is very little difference between it and the Gaelic; and that a Highlander can converse easily with an Irishman. This remark holds true in some parts of Ireland more than in others. It becomes not a mountaineer of Scotland to say which is the more polished and copious: but if I may be permitted to give my opinion, I must maintain, that while the Irish seems to be more cultivated than the Gaelic, it retains less of its original simplicity. I refer particularly to the conjugation of the verb. In the dark ages, the monks seem to have laboured to make the flexion of the verb in their own tongue, similar to that of the Latin. This alteration, for I cannot call it an improvement,

which is adhered to by all the grammarians, does not seem natural, nor at all suited to the genius of a language that is otherwise beautifully simple.

It has been already remarked, that it is altogether idiomatic in its construction, or, to speak more correctly, its idioms are different from those of all the languages of Europe. It is extremely copious, especially on any subject connected with the passions; though it can scarcely be considered a good vehicle for philosophy. No tongue can better suit the purpose of the orator, whose object is to make an impression on a popular assembly, and who, regardless of precision, seeks only to accomplish his end. Hence also, it is admirably adapted to poetry.

Every one has remarked the readiness with which an Irishman applies the language of endearment to all his associates: and though I had never heard him speak, I should conclude this to be the case from an investigation of his dialect. It abounds with terms, which, if literally translated, would appear to a native of either part of this island, excessively extravagant. This fact seems to confirm the idea which I formerly advanced respecting the tender and mild enthusiasm of the Irish.

The number of people who speak this language is much greater than is generally suppos-

ed. It is spoken throughout the province of Connaught by all the lower orders, a great part of whom scarcely understand any English; and some of those who do, understand it only so as to conduct business: they are incapable of receiving moral or religious instruction through its medium. The Irish is spoken very generally through the other three provinces, except among the descendants of the Scotch in the north. It cannot be supposed that calculations on this subject should be perfectly accurate; but it has been concluded on good grounds that there are about two millions of people in Ireland who are incapable of understanding a continued discourse in English. The grounds on which such calculations are made cannot be deemed very accurate. Dr. Stokes, who has written a pamphlet on the necessity of publishing the scriptures in the Irish language, merely mentions the counties in which it is the *prevailing speech*. He states, indeed, that about two thousand Irish catechisms are sold annually; and concludes from this circumstance, that there must be about twenty thousand persons in Ireland who have made some attempt at reading their native language.* But supposing this calculation to be overrated by half a million; there remains a million and half, a

* The number of those who read the Irish language has been of late greatly increased.

number that is five times greater than all the inhabitants of the Highlands.

How comes it to pass that the Hibernian language, in spite of every exertion to complete its extinction, has survived so long, and continues to be spoken by such a vast multitude of people? In answer to this question, I remark,

First, that every people situated as the Irish, and the Welch, and the Highlanders are, and have been, must be fond of their own language even to enthusiasm. The less intercourse a nation has with foreigners, and the more ignorant it is of their institutions, manners, and language, the more perfect it will consider its own: consequently it will feel the utmost reluctance to give up either. And who in any circumstances can easily relinquish the tongue, which first conveyed to his infant mind the tender and endearing accents of maternal affection, which in riper years he has associated with all his joys and sorrows, with all his pleasing and painful emotions; which is rendered sacred by being the medium of communication with that great and holy Being, whom he adores; and without the aid of which, perhaps, he cannot form an accurate conception on any subject? The complete extinction of the language of a people, time and favourable circumstances alone must effect; unless recourse should

be had to the more cruel, but certainly more expeditious method, of destroying the people at once. How fully is this remark verified in the repeated attempts of William the Norman to introduce the dialect of France among the people which his arms had conquered !

Secondly, the attachment of the human mind to any object is increased in proportion to the reproach and persecution which is suffered for its sake. At this advanced period of the world this obvious truth requires no illustration ; or, if any be necessary, the history of Ireland will furnish it. The exertions which have been made to suppress the language of that country, have greatly strengthened the prepossessions of the natives in its favour ; and they now, in some degree, consider their honour pledged for its preservation.

There is a species of barbarity which though not so revolting to the feelings of humanity as that of the conqueror, who spares neither age nor sex amongst the vanquished, is, perhaps, in itself not less shocking and criminal. To perceive this, however, it is necessary not only to have some warmth of social affection, some regard to the general interests of man, but also to possess a thorough conviction of his responsibility,—not merely to have the doubtful goodness which allows him existence, but the less

ambiguous benevolence which aims at his happiness and welfare. Now, to proscribe the language of a whole people because it does not happen to be the same with the speech of the conqueror and the court, to leave those who speak it in ignorance in order to accelerate its extinction, and even actively to discourage every attempt to instruct and enlighten unless it be in the *protected* tongue, are maxims which appear to me not only barbarous, but absolutely inefficient as to the end in view. The serious nature of these charges, and the general importance of the subject, may justify more extended details respecting the history of the Celtic dialects as existing in the British Isles.

The Welch, it must be allowed, have in general been more fortunate than their brethren. They, no doubt, were at one period very cruelly used ; their bards were inhumanly massacred, and their independence is alienated for ever. But since that period they have been treated with liberality ; neither themselves nor their language have been proscribed. Books have been published in it, and schoolmasters and teachers of religion for ages have instructed them through its medium. The happy result is, that in no country is there more public and private virtue, more domestic happiness, more ardent and scriptural piety, or greater

loyalty and subordination. They have been permitted and even encouraged to cultivate their own tongue, to improve their minds by the tracts that are printed in it; and these are the fruits which this wise measure has produced. It ought to be remarked, however, that Wales has been much indebted to her near vicinity to England. Her inhabitants, indeed, inform us that they owe most of their advantages to their own powerful genius, to their ancient literature, and to the taste for knowledge which, they say, has always been preserved amongst them. Without entering into any inquiry as to the truth of this, it may safely be affirmed, that they are under many obligations to benevolent Englishmen who have visited their country, and who have done more for the education of its poor inhabitants, than sixty years ago was done for their own. Perhaps it was impossible to be in perfect contact with the land of freedom, of knowledge, and of science, without partaking in some of its blessings. At this moment there are in circulation nearly a hundred thousand copies of the Welch Bible.

The Highlands of Scotland, from particular circumstances in its history, enjoyed all the advantages of the reformation. The clergy were required to preach in the Gaelic lan-

guage : schoolmasters were appointed in every parish, who, in general, could teach the children to read in that tongue. But unfortunately the rebellion of 1715, and of 1745, excited prejudices against both the Highlanders and their language : their very garb, martial as it is, was proscribed ; and no measure was thought too severe, which had for its object the suppression of any thing allied to the insurgent mountaineers. It was even deemed improper to publish books in the Gaelic, lest it should tend to the preservation of the language : so powerful was this prejudice, that it was after a long struggle, and against incessant opposition, that the Society for propagating Christian Knowledge undertook at a recent period the translation of the Bible. When the British and Foreign Bible Society published an edition of the same translation, it encountered a considerable share of this opposition. It was said in both cases, that though the Highlanders were ignorant of the scriptures, it is improper to supply them in their own tongue ; that this plan tends to preserve a language which ought to be abolished ; that there were only a few thousands in the Highlands who could not understand English, and that these would soon be removed ; and that since few of these could read the Gaelic, the translation of the

sacred writings could be of no use to them. This was maintained after it was known that there are three hundred thousand people in the Highlands, who do not understand a *continued* discourse in the English language.

In conformity to these absurd reasonings and prejudices, schoolmasters of every description have been accustomed hitherto to teach the children, who do not understand one word of English, in that language only, till few of them have time left to learn to read tolerably in the language which they understand, and through which they can possibly obtain information.

It is far from my intention to insinuate, that the honourable the Society in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge in the Highlands and Isles, does not explicitly command their schoolmasters to teach the Gaelic language, where that language chiefly prevails. No one can look at their regulations without being perfectly satisfied on this head; nor is it possible to advert to the good which this institution has produced, without admitting its undeniable claim to the everlasting gratitude of mankind. If the Gaelic language is not taught in the most efficient manner, the fault is not to be attributed to the honourable society, but to the erroneous sentiments which have prevailed on the subject.

Happily the Highland ministers universally preached in the Gaelic language before the year 1715, and 1745; otherwise it would certainly have been deemed highly expedient to preach only in the more modern tongue. Some in their simplicity will say, this is impossible. How could three hundred thousand people be left without intelligible instruction of any kind? The history of Ireland will inform us that such a case is not impossible.

The reformation, it is well known, has made very little progress in that country: the mass of the people remain in connection with the church of Rome. Of these, as has been already observed, there are a million and a half, who understood no tongue but the Irish. Now, the established church has made no provision whatever for this population; there is not one of its ministers that preaches in this language.* In a parish containing twelve hundred inhabitants, in some instances not above one hundred, in others not above fifty persons, can derive any advantage from a sermon, or any other continued discourse in English, and yet, the clergyman who is entrusted with the care of their souls understands no other. It is true most of these people are Roman catholics. Are they not forced, however, to remain in the bosom of the Roman church? Their

* So far as my observation goes, this assertion is just.

priests give them that instruction in the venerable tongue of their fathers, which the protestant teachers have always denied them. And, yet, these teachers complain of the increase of papists, and of the gross ignorance of the people. How inconsistent is man !

Let it be observed that this shameful neglect of the Irish population does not proceed from mere accident ; most of the Anglo-Hibernians attempt to justify it. This many of them do by arguments which are too absurd to be mentioned. The principal are these two : that the number of people who understand Irish only, is not so great as I have stated ; and that though it were, the instruction of the people in this language, can answer no good end. In answer to the first of these arguments, I shall only say, that though I cannot pretend to accuracy in my calculations on this subject, I have always found, that in places where gentlemen hostile to this tongue assured me there was not a word of it spoken, in these very districts, I heard very little English. The truth is, a great part of Ireland is not much explored by such gentlemen ; and when they do travel, it is not through the vallies and recesses of the mountains, but along the *roads*, where they must, at the inns, see those whose interest it is to speak the language of strangers. What would be thought of an Eng-

lishman, who should travel from Edinburgh to Fort William, and thence to Inverness, and there declare that the English tongue was spoken through all that country; that it was therefore unnecessary to teach the people in any other? As to the second objection, though obviously absurd, I shall only say, that it appears to me to be a dictate of reason, and of common sense, that if ever a people be informed and enlightened, it must be by means of the language, which they understand. Will it not answer a good end to enlighten, and inform, and improve the native Irish? Will it not answer the most noble and beneficent purposes to inculcate those principles, which will make them good men, and good subjects? But this measure will perpetuate the Irish tongue. What then? its existence surely can do no harm; whereas ignorance, and vice, and superstition, will always produce evil.

The truth is, however, that the cultivation of either the Irish or the Gaelic is the most effectual, as well as the most expeditious plan that can be adopted for their extinction. Make any people intelligent and rational, and they will gradually lose their prejudices; many of them will acquire a taste for general knowledge, and they will seek for it in the general tongue of the empire. Besides, all their interest must

incline them to this measure: if they wish to improve their condition, or to have their sons advanced in the service of their country, they will find it necessary to have some English *book-learning* themselves, and to be at some pains to impart it to their children.*

But I have said enough to justify the charges which I have advanced against the adversaries of the Irish tongue: and if I have been in any degree successful in my statement, I think it will appear, that the means employed to suppress it are all founded in ignorance of human nature; that they are not only barbarous, but absolutely inefficient as to the end in view.

Before I leave this subject, I ought perhaps to mention, that in 1808, that part of the Irish population to which I refer, had few schoolmasters of any description; and of these I met with scarcely any who professed to teach the natives in their own tongue. Some of the Anglo-Hibernians at that time strongly maintained, that this dialect is so barbarous, that it cannot answer the purpose of instruction: others, that it would awaken the enthusiasm of the *Wild Irish*, (as they call them,) to make any attempt of this kind, and consequently that it might prove dangerous to the govern-

* See note E.

ment: and others, that they had no desire to be taught in Irish, and that it would be useless to send teachers among them for this purpose. Schoolmasters, however, of this very description have since been employed, and the people have received them with the utmost affection and gratitude.—But this subject is considered more fully in a subsequent part of this volume.

The last circumstance which I shall notice as contributing to the preservation of the Irish language is, its association with popery. From the foregoing observations this particular must have been anticipated. It has been stated, that the priests, wherever it is necessary, are all acquainted with this tongue, while the protestant teachers are all ignorant of it, or at least do not take the trouble of making it the vehicle of religious instruction. This circumstance has become the occasion of considerable rancour and animosity. For, on the one hand, the understanding of English is the characteristic of Protestantism; on the other, the Irish tongue is the mark of Catholicism. This man hates his neighbour, because he speaks no Irish; and his neighbour treats him with contempt because he is not acquainted with English. By the principle of association, the Protestant confounds Irish with disloyalty and rebellion, and the Catholic considers English as allied to pro-

testantism and damnable error. This is only true, perhaps, of the uneducated part of the population; but it should be recollected, that when that population is immense, as in the present case, its very prejudices merit some degree of attention.

The circumstance to which I have now alluded has given, I am persuaded, a very considerable influence to the Catholic superstition in Ireland; and there is no way in which that influence can either be counteracted or diminished, but by the adoption and prosecution of plans very different from those that have been hitherto pursued in reference to that country.

It may, perhaps, be expected that I should deduce some inference from the Irish language respecting the probable origin of the Irish people.—It has appeared that this is, with a very few variations, entirely the same as the Gaelic: it has also been shewn, that the great outlines of the Irish character are the same as those of the Highlander; and that the more minute shades of difference are to be ascribed to moral and political causes. The conclusion from this induction evidently is, that the Irish and the Highlanders are originally the same people. As to the question, whether the Irish emigrated from Scotland, or the Caledonians from

Ireland, it appears to me, in point of utility, much the same as that of the Welchman, who endeavoured to ascertain, whether the Welch was the language of Adam and Eve in Paradise.

CHAP. V.

REMARKS ON SOME PARTS OF THE HISTORY OF
IRELAND.

MR. HUME remarks that the conquered provinces of free countries are more oppressed than those of absolute monarchies. “Compare,” says he, “the *Pais conquis* of France with Ireland, and you will be convinced of this truth ; though this latter kingdom being in a good measure peopled from England possesses so many rights and privileges as should naturally make it challenge better treatment than that of a conquered province. Corsica is also an obvious instance to the same purpose.”*

Those principles in human nature which account for this general truth are very obvious ; and the observation so far as it regards Ireland will be fully confirmed by a careful survey of the history of that country, since its conquest by Henry. Its situation before this period though

* Hume's Essay on Politics and Science, p. 30.

no doubt, rude and barbarous, was compatible with some share of domestic enjoyment. It possessed undisturbed its own governments, its laws and institutions; and these, though far from being the best, were better adapted to the manners and genius of the people to be governed than the most perfect political arrangements.

Imported forms of government seldom produce happy effects in the first instance, especially when these forms are imposed by the desolating sword of the invader. Then, the native imbibes and retains the most inveterate prejudices against every thing that comes from the stranger: his language, his manners, and his very garb, every circumstance that is associated with his country and his person, become the objects of cordial detestation. And though the hand of power may restrain this hatred, yet power alone cannot remove it, nor altogether counteract its effects; it will discover itself by turbulence and insurrection, and often by making the people more ferocious than they had been in the state of their original barbarity. Its influence also must be considered as deleterious on the manners and dispositions of the conquerors: power, which may be considered as absolute, exercised over those who are viewed by them as infinitely

their inferiors, and from whom, perhaps, they are receiving constant provocation, will gradually superinduce a cruelty of disposition, and a stupid insensibility to the happiness of their fellow creatures, which all the civilization and humanity of the country which they have left will not be able to prevent. The force of this antipathy can only be diminished by time, by the conciliating measures of a wise government, by benevolent and ameliorating exertion, by sharing the distinction and privileges of the state equally among all the subjects, and by a readiness to consult and even to flatter the national prejudices of the natives.

If the conquest of Ireland had been rendered the means of communicating that moderate degree of civilization and happiness which England then enjoyed, its propriety might have been maintained on the score of benevolence, though, perhaps, not of justice. “ But unfortunately the state of Ireland rendered that island “ so little inviting to the English, that only a “ few of desperate fortunes could be persuaded, “ from time to time, to transport themselves “ thither; and instead of reclaiming the natives from their uncultivated manners, they “ were gradually assimilated to the ancient “ inhabitants, and degenerated from the customs of their own nation. It was also found

“ requisite to bestow great military and arbitrary powers on the leaders who commanded a handful of men amidst such hostile multitudes ; and law and equity, in a little time, became as much unknown in the English settlements, as they had ever been among the Irish tribes. Palatinates were erected in favour of the new adventurers ; independent authority conferred ; the natives, never fully subdued, still retained their animosity against the conquerors ; their hatred was retaliated by like injuries ; and from these causes, the Irish, during the course of four centuries, remained still savage and untractable : it was not till the latter end of Elizabeth’s reign, that the island was fully subdued, nor till that of her successor, that it gave hopes of becoming a useful conquest to England.”*

Such is the opinion of Mr. Hume ; and it certainly, though not a pleasing, is a very correct statement. There are several facts connected with it, however, which merit a little more elucidation.

The Greeks and Romans, the polished nations of antiquity, have been justly blamed for the pride and insolence which they discovered to their less fortunate neighbours. But this is

* Hume’s History of England, v. ii. p. 431.

a kind of fruit that will grow on every soil and is congenial with every climate: it is as well adapted to that of Great Britain, as to the mild temperature of Italy and Greece. This circumstance will account for the opinions which were long entertained in this country respecting the inhabitants of the neighbouring isle. Will it be credited that it is only of late the native Irish were viewed in any other light than a species of the rudest savage barbarians, as unworthy, as they were incapable, of receiving instruction; and were therefore abandoned, without a single effort to cultivate or reclaim them, to the dark and devious mazes of the profoundest ignorance, and of the most hateful but fascinating error? Hence, during four centuries subsequent to the conquest, the English law was confined to very narrow limits; the great body of the people had no advantages whatever from it; they lived without law or equity, subjected to a number of rapacious and petty tyrants who plundered and massacred at discretion. If their condition, therefore, was wretched before their alliance with England, its degradation and misery must have been increased in a tenfold degree during this unhappy period. At a time of comparative tranquillity, the bards by their musical influence,

and the chieftains by their patriarchal authority, would produce a considerable degree of order in the community: but when the whole kingdom was in a state of fermentation, without law, without order, living without regard to justice or humanity, and when such a state of things was not temporary but lasting for ages, what imagination can conceive half the misery which this unequalled reign of anarchy and of horror must necessarily occasion? It was during this time, that an Englishman when he happened to murder an Irishman was punished only by a fine; whereas a native, when he killed an Englishman, was always punished with death. Thus, the latter was treated as connected with an inferior order of beings; viewed nearly in the same light as West India slaves, and punished in a similar manner. And as in times of violence and outrage, the crime of murder was very frequent, this circumstance tended to produce an implacable hatred between the original inhabitants and the English; a disposition which, unfortunately, has been exasperated by other causes, and continued long after the grievance which partly occasioned it has been redressed.*

* “The limit which divided the possessions of the English settler from those of the native Irish, was called the pale; and the expressions of inhabitants *within the pale*, and

Besides, the unbounded power and rapacity of the Anglo-Hibernian barons were attended with circumstances which tended to increase the general calamity. This power they exerted not only for the destruction of one another, but for the irritation of the native chieftains, who, when they attempted to repel the insult, afforded their adversaries the desired opportunity of seizing their property. It was then not unfrequent for bold adventurers to undertake expeditions against the natives to enrich themselves with the spoils; and that at a time, too, when these poor people were giving no offence. Thus, they were exposed to the attacks of some of the most worthless of mankind; possessing neither law, nor friend, nor protector; whilst the land of their fathers was considered as the

“ *without the pale*, were the terms by which the two nations
 “ were distinguished. It is almost superfluous to state, that
 “ the most bloody and pernicious warfare was carried on
 “ upon the borders—sometimes for something—sometimes
 “ for nothing; most commonly for cows. The Irish, over
 “ whom the sovereigns of England affected a sort of nominal
 “ dominion, were entirely governed by their own laws;
 “ and so little connexion had they with the justice of the
 “ invading country, that it was as lawful to kill an Irishman,
 “ as it was to kill a badger or a fox. The instances are innumerable,
 “ where the defendant has pleaded that the deceased was an Irishman,
 “ and that therefore defendant had
 “ a right to kill him; and upon the proof of Hibernianism,
 “ acquittal followed of course.”

Edin. Rev. July, 1807.

lawful prey of every turbulent and enterprising Englishman.

How different was all this from that mild and patriarchal chieftainship which existed in the Highlands, and even in Ireland before this period! Under this species of government the chieftain was, indeed, the father, the friend, and the protector of his people; he lived in rude magnificence, and they shared his bounty; his authority, though absolute, was seldom exerted with rigour or cruelty; his manners, which were imitated by all his clan, were elevated though not refined, and polite though not polished. But this scene, so beautiful and so primitive, so pleasing to the imagination, and embracing so much comparative enjoyment, vanished wherever the standard of England was unfurled; and this name, which, throughout the world was always associated with justice, humanity, and freedom, in this instance was allied to oppression and tyranny. It is true, much of this evil was not committed by the authority or even with the knowledge of the parent state. The government of that state had its attention occupied by long and destructive wars, and by civil commotions, harassing and ruinous: so that the state of Ireland was only taken into consideration at intervals, and then not with that spirit which a more liberal policy would have dictated. It is

only of late that its situation has awakened the public attention, and that the severity with which it has been treated, and the cruelties to which it was exposed, have been deemed worthy of full and candid consideration.

It may be asked, what purpose can it serve to recal these grievances to our recollection, or to refer us to so afflicting a period of Irish history? In this I have two ends in view, nearly allied to the object which it is designed these pages should promote. First, to shew how unjustly Ireland has for a long time been treated, and thus to unfold some of the causes which have retarded its improvement: and, secondly, to shew how much should be done by way of retribution for a country so long neglected.

The first of these particulars needs little illustration. It can never be unseasonable to place before our eyes circumstances, which, however disgusting, have nevertheless been real; and which, though now known only by historic records, have produced effects that will be felt for ages. It is to the period to which Mr. Hume refers, and to a few centuries subsequent to it, that we are to trace many of the sources of that complication of misery and wretchedness at which the people of this country wonder.

Indeed, there has been something singularly unfortunate in the fate of the native Irish: cir-

cumstances in close succession, since their first connection with England, have occurred to vitiate and depress them. Over some of these circumstances the government of this country had little controul; though many of them have certainly been occasioned by the policy avowed by the ministers of Queen Elizabeth, which is expressed in the following words. “ Should
“ we exert ourselves in reducing this country
“ to order and civility, it must soon acquire
“ power, consequence, and riches. The inha-
“ bitants will be thus alienated from England;
“ they will cast themselves into the arms of
“ some foreign power, or perhaps erect them-
“ selves into an independent and separate
“ state. Let us rather connive at their disor-
“ ders; for a weak and disordered people never
“ can detach themselves from the crown of
“ England.”*

The second object which I had in view, in this short sketch, was to shew how much it behoves Britain to do for this country by way of retribution. What has been done to ameliorate the state of the Irish? Doubtless much; but it may be said, that little has been accomplished, compared with what should have been done. We talk as if we were astonished at the ignorance, the wickedness, the cruelty, and the intellectual degradation of the people of

* Leland's History of Ireland, v. iii.

Ireland, whilst we forget that the profligacy, the rapacity, the nationality, and bigotry, of our fathers contributed directly or indirectly to the production of these evils ; whilst the wise policy, the patient and benevolent exertion of their descendants, have done little to remove them. It is easy for the numerous tribes of our little politicians to say, that there is a radical difference in disposition and genius between that people and ourselves, that they have a strong inaptitude to the pursuit or attainment of moral excellence, that all our measures for their improvement must be fruitless, and that public order and future allegiance among them, can only be maintained by the arm of power. This is the language of prejudice and ignorance ; it is the conception of narrow minds, who are incapable of taking a comprehensive view of a subject. For it is education, it is a free government, it is religion and moral instruction that form the national character ; and it becomes us seriously to inquire, whether these blessings have been enjoyed by our neighbours and fellow subjects, or whether some of them, at least, have not been withheld. It is certain that we are their debtors to a very large amount, and that much must be done before we can quit the score of justice and begin that of generosity. This will appear farther in the sequel.

CHAP. VI.

THE PROGRESS OF THE REFORMATION IN IRELAND—REMARKS ON THE STATE OF MORALS AND RELIGION, BEFORE THIS PERIOD.

THE mere establishment of forms of religion and of civil government, however pure in their nature, and beneficial in their tendency, can be of little avail to the general happiness of any people, unless they have been previously prepared for their reception, and unless the adoption of them be the effect rather than the cause of their improvement. It can contribute little to the good of the people, that in states the most corrupt, where the multitude are grossly stupid and ignorant, revolutions take place in infinite succession: these changes only give them new masters, whilst they leave their condition marked with the same unvaried supineness, the same apathy to noble and vigorous exertion, the same melancholy and hopeless degradation. There has been a revolution in France as well as in England; but the one has secured the liberty and independence of the

subject for ever, while the other has produced a power which attempts to destroy the dearest remains of all that claims the sympathies and affections of man, and threatens with its gigantic force to bring the whole world again into bondage. It was not because the French people wanted philosophers and patriots, men who sincerely wished the renovation of the state, and the happiness of society, that their chains have thus been rivetted ; but the *multitude* was ignorant : they had more of the senseless forms of popery than of the pure morality of that religion whose name it assumes ; they had more of the blind fanaticism of a revolutionary phrenzy, than of the popular enthusiasm of a nation already beyond the power of thralldom, because they determine to be free—already in the enjoyment of liberty, because they are capable of appreciating the inconceivable advantage of that liberty at which they aim.

Are we then to conclude, that unless a people be somewhat enlightened, all forms of government, whether civil or religious, are in point of utility to them alike ? This were perhaps granting too much ; since it is more probable that a free government, if, indeed, such an institution can in such circumstances long exist, will improve the condition of the people sooner than one of an opposite description. It is per-

fectly evident, however, that forms of religion can do no good, unless their immediate and direct object be to produce pure devotion and genuine morality; and that when these effects are produced, a nation will spontaneously relinquish the unmeaning and pernicious mummeries of superstition. First enlighten the people, and make them *christians*, before you attempt to reform and make them protestants. This, at least, seems the most natural, as well as the most efficient mode of procedure. Accordingly, in those countries in which the reformation from popery commenced, and to which it has extended its inestimable blessings, some knowledge had been diffused among the lower orders of the people; their condition in society was considerably improved; and the sacred writings began to be in circulation: so that their departure from the tyranny of the church of Rome was as agreeable to them as to their rulers, and an event which, though its accomplishment might have been protracted, no power on earth could ultimately prevent. To be convinced of the truth of this, let us only advert to one of the causes which, in conjunction with many others, occasioned that long night of moral darkness, so illustrative of human folly and weakness, and so replete with instruction to the ages to come.

In the primitive christian church, the circulation of the sacred writings must have been necessarily limited. The method of multiplying copies of any author, was, at that time, as well as for many ages afterwards, extremely tedious and expensive : the opulent alone could afford the gratification of a tolerable library. From this circumstance, a few copies of the inspired volume, or perhaps a single copy among the members of one congregation, was as much as could be expected. And though this would be carefully and frequently consulted, yet from the nature of the case it must be presumed, that the people derived their principal information from the pastors of the church. Notwithstanding this disadvantage, christianity, to a period long subsequent to the decease of its only infallible teachers, flourished in all its purity, and mightily prevailed. Its humble preachers were not yet acquainted with the metaphysical jargon of the schools ; the doctrine of Christ supremely occupied their attention ; neither was there yet any temptation presented to unprincipled men to assume the mask of religion, to make the church the path to opulence and power, and zeal for its cause a pretence to the accomplishment of the most criminal designs.

The great comparative scarcity of the scrip-

tures, before the invention of the art of printing, is a circumstance whose influence on the introduction of error and false religion ought not to be unnoticed or forgotten. When the great body of the believers received all their knowledge from the rulers of the church, who were erring mortals like themselves, it was very possible for them in many instances to be wrong. Difference of opinion would of course arise; this would beget division; division would produce bigotry and intolerance; and these qualities, when strengthened by the love of victory and power, would end in the violence of persecution. A knowledge of the Bible not being familiar to the people, it would, in the progress of error, not be deemed very essential to their teachers; a minute acquaintance with polemical divinity, together with the imposing dogmas and senseless disputes of the church, would be deemed far more useful in a candidate for the holy ministry. Error being thus finally established, and along with it a powerful order of men who would feel interested in its support, that part of mankind who should presume to adhere to the simplicity of the ancient faith, must incur the odious name of heretic, and feel themselves involved in the punishment assigned to this unfortunate character.

Ireland, at a very early period, was visited

with the true religion ; and according to the testimony of respectable historians, it continued for a long time the seat of learning and of piety. It is probable, however, that though all the inhabitants are said to have embraced christianity, multitudes only acquiesced in it, without relinquishing their pagan ceremonies, or their barbarous practices. Had the case been otherwise, and had the population been generally so holy and enlightened as their annalists maintain, there would have remained less ambiguous vestiges of a purer morality. At the same time, I am far from denying to the first christian missionaries in this country, or to their successors, a great degree of purity, both of doctrine and of practice : they boldly resisted the encroachments of the church of Rome ; and it must be allowed, that in forming an opinion of their character, and the extent of their labours, we must recollect the difficulties which they had to encounter, and the variety of circumstances which tended to counteract their benevolent exertions.

The seminary which had been established at Armagh, and which sent enlightened pastors, not merely to different parts of Ireland, but to England and the continent, was totally destroyed by the barbarism of restless clans, whose petty contests seldom permitted them to enjoy

the blessings of peace. This circumstance produced an unfavourable effect on the literature and religion of the country. It was impossible for many churches after this to obtain ministers, whilst others were supplied with men the most unqualified for their office. In some places the people seem to have been left for ages without instruction, whilst in others, error was dignified with the name of knowledge. Thus the grossest ignorance, and its never-failing attendant, superstition, gradually covered the whole land.

The influence of the English invasion and settlement in producing this state of things ought not to be overlooked. For upwards of four hundred and forty years the colony from England was involved in almost constant hostilities with the natives. They were better skilled in the art of war, better provided with provision and ammunition, and might, with a very inconsiderable army, have subjugated Ireland to the dominion of the parent country. But the chiefs of this party unfortunately conceived, that it was not their interest ever to make peace with their enemies, or to confer on them the blessings of English government. Accordingly, when they were reduced so low as suppliantly to implore these privileges, various methods were devised to prevent

this unfortunate and neglected race from enjoying that protection of equal law which they so earnestly desired.

Whilst the Irish remained in this secluded state, every petty chieftain of the *pale** made war on them at discretion, plundered their property, murdered them as dangerous and disaffected, and took possession of that land from which the wretched aborigines were expelled. It is true, the latter were often the aggressors: the provocations to which they were exposed made them sometimes fickle, often ferocious, and occasionally deceitful. The harvest, however, which their perpetual divisions and insurrections afforded to their adversaries, was deemed too valuable to induce them to adopt any effectual measures for bringing them to a termination.

It is not easy for those who have always enjoyed the advantages of civilized society, to form an adequate idea of the state of things to which I refer; or to entertain a just conception of the deleterious influence which perpe-

* Though every reader of Irish history is acquainted with the meaning of the word *pale*, as applied by Irish historians, it may not be improper to mention, that it is used to denote the confines of that little territory which the English colony possessed. See the note to page 109.

tual war must exert on the comfort, virtue, and happiness of even uncultivated life. This dreadful experiment has been tried on the coast both of Africa and Ireland, and it has been found to awaken the worst passions of the human breast, and to debase the character beneath the ordinary standard of savage life. And it is not a little singular that the oppressors of both countries should have attempted to justify their hateful tyranny by the same arguments. Those of Ireland, like their brethren of more modern times, maintained, that the natives of that country were a race inferior to themselves, that they were incapable of improvement or of subordination; and that, therefore, they ought not to enjoy the liberty or protection of fellow creatures, and of fellow subjects.* Acting on this principle, they often murdered the natives with impunity, or, at any rate, were only punished by a trifling fine. The darkest atrocities were committed under the pretext of necessity.

How could any people placed in these circumstances advance in improvement? Or could it be expected that their curiosity should be so awakened by previous disquisition as to

* Ireland's History of Ireland. Spencer's View of Ireland.

render them zealous in the work of reformation? In other countries this work began by the gradual elevation of the lower orders of society ; by their acquiring additional importance in the state : and this again was occasioned by the exertions of the sovereigns to diminish the overgrown power of the barons, and by that rapid increase of commerce which has been so sensibly experienced since the beginning of the sixteenth century. But in Ireland, if there was any movement in the state of society, it was retrograde : the people were too poor, and thought themselves too insignificant, to make any effort to ameliorate their condition, or to take any pains to acquire knowledge.

Besides, in other countries learning had revived ; the classic pages of antiquity had been unfolded to men of letters, and the very vulgar began to shake off their lethargy and ask instruction. But in this country there was no seat of learning, no school of science, no keen disputants to sharpen the intellects of their countrymen ; no Luther to arouse their passions ; nor a Knox to achieve, by the force of his rude eloquence, their deliverance from ecclesiastical bondage. Whilst the rest of Europe was

awakened, and its inhabitants divided by theological controversy, they remained in a state of ignorance, poverty, and oppression. During this period it may be said with truth, that

Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll ;
Chill penury repressed their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

CHAP. VII.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS ON THE REFORMATION,
AND ON THE CAUSES BY WHICH ITS PROGRESS
IN IRELAND HAS BEEN RETARDED.

NATIONS resemble individuals as to the progress of the reasoning powers: the human mind is slowly matured; its principles and faculties are gradually unfolded; and its complete cultivation and expansion are only the result of patient discipline. Nature, when she presents a flower to our view, exhibits it complete in all its parts; but she occupies time in bringing it to its full maturity.

But circumstances, we have seen, occurred in Ireland to counteract this beautiful state of progressive advancement to happiness and perfection. It was, however, whilst these circumstances operated with all their force, that the reformation under Henry VIII. was advancing in England, and that its friends attempted to introduce it to this country. “ The spirit of religious dis-
“ quisition had indeed forced its way into
“ Ireland, with the succession of English set-

“ tlers, so that in the famous parliament of
“ the tenth year of Henry the Seventh, laws
“ had been enacted to prevent the growth of
“ Lollardism and heresy. But such seeds of
“ reformation found an unfavourable soil, and
“ could scarcely spring up with any consider-
“ able degree of extent and vigour. Ireland
“ was not a place for those circumstances to
“ operate, which favoured the first reformers
“ in other parts of Europe. A people not
“ connected by one and the same system of
“ polity, and for the most part strangers to the
“ refinements and advantages of the political
“ union ; harrassed by a perpetual succession
“ of petty wars, distracted by mutual jealousy,
“ and the most civilized among them living
“ in continual alarm, and daily called out to
“ repel invasion ; could have little leisure for
“ speculation, and little disposition for those
“ enquiries, which were pursued with such
“ avidity in countries more composed. The
“ people had severely felt the oppression of the
“ clergy ; but what in other countries appeared
“ the capital and leading grievance, was but
“ one of those oppressions which this land
“ experienced. Others were more grievous,
“ and required more immediate redress. When
“ Europe had declared almost unanimously
“ against the yoke of ecclesiastical power, a

“ slight attempt made in one province of Ire-
“ land, to circumscribe the privileges of the
“ clergy, raised a most violent and insolent
“ clamour among the order, although it
“ amounted to nothing more than empower-
“ ing the civil magistrate to imprison eccle-
“ siastical debtors.

“ Had the generous policy prevailed of col-
“ lecting all the inhabitants into one body of
“ English subjects, a union and pacification of
“ ages, must have prepared the people for the
“ reformation now proposed ; but among the
“ fatal consequences of excluding the old
“ natives from the pale of English law, blind-
“ ness and bigotry proved the natural conse-
“ quences of a disquieted, uncivilized, and
“ dissolute mode of living : and the irregulari-
“ ties in the ecclesiastical constitution of
“ Ireland, naturally resulting from the odious
“ and absurd distinction of its inhabitants,
“ contributed in no small degree to confirm
“ the people in the grossest ignorance, and, of
“ consequence, in the meanest superstition.
“ In those dioceses where law and civility
“ were most prevalent, the prelates found it
“ impossible to extend their pastoral care or
“ jurisdiction to the districts occupied by the
“ old natives. In these districts, where war
“ and confusion chiefly raged, the appoint-

“ ment of prelates and pastors was sometimes
“ totally neglected.

“ A clergy without discipline or knowledge,
“ and a laity without instruction, were, in proportion to their ignorance, abjectly attached
“ to the papal authority ; the only authority in
“ religion, which they had been accustomed
“ to reverence ; and which, for the first time,
“ they now heard impeached with astonishment and horror. And one peculiar prejudice there was in favour of the see of
“ Rome, which operated equally on the Irish,
“ and even on the more enlightened of the
“ English race. Ireland had been for ages
“ considered, and industriously represented
“ as a fief of the pope, in right of the church
“ of Saint Peter. By virtue of this imaginary
“ right, the seigniorship of this kingdom, it was
“ well known, had been conferred on Henry
“ the Second. The Irish parliament had occasionally acknowledged this to be the only
“ legitimate foundation of the authority of the
“ crown of England. It was, therefore, accounted more especially profane and damnable, to deny the authority of the Pope, even
“ in his own inheritance ; and that a prince
“ entrusted with this inheritance, for the protection of religion, should disclaim his
“ father and his sovereign, and impiously

“ violate the stipulations of his ancestor, by
“ which alone he was entitled to any authority
“ or pre-eminence in Ireland.”*

The attempt at reformation in this country, was in a great measure frustrated from the very circumstance of its being premature. It was not at a time when the body of the people were ignorant of all religion, that an effort should have been made to change the form of their ecclesiastical government. No plan of reform is likely to succeed at any time, unless it be the effect, rather than the cause, of national intelligence and improvement. If a number of able, enlightened, and pious ministers, had been previously employed to instruct the people; or if, even then, any attempt had been made to remove the gross darkness of the natives by communicating religious knowledge in their own language, together with other conciliating measures to remove their prejudices, perhaps the hopes of the reformers might not have been so utterly disappointed. But there were few of the clergy, who were very deeply interested in the business. Browne, Archbishop of Dublin, was certainly upright and zealous in the cause; he laboured incessantly with all his ecclesiastics to enlighten

* Leland's History of Ireland, v. ii. p. 158, 159.

the people, and reform the church; but he laboured with few coadjutors, equally disinterested in this important service; and he was in the bosom of a church, the majority of whose clergy was ignorant, prejudiced, and corrupt, and whose inveterate rancour and hostility were directed against all who exposed the absurdities of the superstition of Rome. Besides, it unfortunately happened, that at this very time, Cromer occupied the see of Armagh, a man of some learning, of more zeal, and of unbounded influence. He harangued his suffragans, he inflamed their prejudices, he entreated, he commanded them as they regarded their eternal salvation, not to deny the holy faith, nor to embrace a heretical doctrine, which was utterly damnable. Such inflammatory addresses were not necessary to awaken the enthusiasm of the people, to confirm the bigotry of the priests, or to induce both to make an invincible opposition to opinions imported from the English nation.

This circumstance of itself was sufficient to excite the hatred of the native Irish. Their church they maintained to be ancient; to have been originally founded in apostolic purity by Saint Patrick; to be under the more peculiar care of the holy Roman pontiff; to permit any changes, therefore, to be made in its order and

government by men who had invaded their country and dethroned and extirpated their princes, was deemed not merely infamous, but eternally fatal. The multitude, indeed, were not capable of entering deeply into disquisitions of any kind ; it was enough for them that they had always hated the strangers, as they still call the English in their own tongue ; and that they felt themselves equally prejudiced against their language, their customs, and their new religion.

To perceive fully the extent of these prejudices, it should be recollected that at this time few of the natives were included in the pale ; that is, the whole population of Ireland, that of five or six counties excepted, were not English subjects, they were divided into clans, and governed by their respective chiefs. A great part of this multitude had never seen Englishmen ; they had only heard of their alleged cruelties ; they were, therefore, fully prepared to oppose the religious tenets of men, whom they considered as enemies. Besides, their chieftains still adhered to the ancient mode of worship ; and their priests, ignorant as they were, knew well enough how to address themselves to their fears—how to alarm their imagination at the prospect of a change.—But there was one circumstance connected with the situation of this people,

which should be particularly attended to: they were totally unacquainted with the English tongue. The Irish language, the only one which they knew, was generally predominant in the reign of Henry the Seventh, even in the pale.* Now, it is most certain, that no instructors of the reformed religion were capable of addressing them in this dialect; they were, therefore, abandoned to their own ignorance and prejudice. The idea of making a complete reformation in Ireland does not seem to have occurred to any one under this reign. They confined their attention to that part of the island which was subject to the government and laws of England; and whether they were appalled by the difficulty of the undertaking, or discouraged by their ignorance of the Irish language, it is certain, that the other part was entirely overlooked. Under the following reign some patriotic and pious individuals addressed the queen on the wretched state of the church, and maintained the necessity of procuring ministers acquainted with the Irish tongue. The following is an extract from Sir Henry Sidney's letter to Elizabeth, which contains these sentiments.

“ And nowe most deare mistres, and most

* Spencer's View of Ireland. Leland's History of Ireland.

“ honoured sovereigne, I solye addresse to you
 “ as the onlye salve giver, to this your sore
 “ and sicke realme; the lamentable estate of
 “ the most noble and principall lymm thereof,
 “ the church I mean, as fowle, deformed, and
 “ as cruellie crushed, as any other part thereof,
 “ by your onlye gracious and relygious order
 “ to be cured or at least amended.”—Sir H.
 Sidney having mentioned the wretched
 state of the Irish church; and that even in
 the district of Meath, the best inhabited part
 of all the kingdom, “ containing 224 pa-
 “ rishe churches, 105 are impropriated to son-
 “ drie possessions, and all leased out for years,
 “ or in fee farme, to severall farmers and great
 “ gayne reaped out of them above the rent:” he
 “ goes on to propose, that good ministers
 might be found to occupy the places, and
 made able to live in them; “ in choyce of
 “ which ministers for the remote places where
 “ the *Englishe* tounge is not understood,
 “ it is most necessarie that soche be chosen as
 “ can speake Irishe, for whiche searche would
 “ be made first, and spedylie, in your own uni-
 “ versities; and any found there well affected
 “ in religion, and well conditioned beside, they
 “ would be sent hither animated by your majes-
 “ tie; yea, though it were somewhat to your
 “ highness’ chardge; and on perill of my liffe,
 “ you shall fynde it retorned with gayne, before

“ three yeares be expired : if there be no soche
 “ there, or not inough (for I wish tene or twelve
 “ at the least) to be sent, who might be placed
 “ in offices of dignitie of the church, in remote
 “ places of this realme. Then I do wishe, (but
 “ this most humblie under your hignes’ correc-
 “ tion,) that you would write to the regent of
 “ Scotlande, where, as I learne, there are maney
 “ of the reformed church, that are of this lan-
 “ guage ; and though for a while your majestie
 “ were at some chardge, it were well bestowed,
 “ for, in shorte tyme, thousands would be gayn-
 “ ed to Christ, that nowe are lost, or left at the
 “ woorst.”

It does not appear that this princess ever acted on the salutary principles recommended by this gentleman. It is not too much to say, that if the plan here proposed had met with approbation and countenance, the majority of the people of Ireland would, at this day, have been virtuous, industrious, and enlightened protestants.

It generally happens in the course of human affairs that one evil is productive of many : and the circumstance to which I allude, has produced effects, the injurious influence of which, is felt to the present day. For in consequence of the ill concerted and inadequate measures which the government of Ireland, in conjunction with the reformers, pursued, almost the whole

of the Irish population were left in the hands of a foreign power, whose emissaries were numerous, subtile, and artful ; and who could not but be successful where there were scarcely any to oppose, and among a people already prepossessed in their favour.

In the first place, the natives were by this means confirmed in their attachment to the church of Rome.—They had, before this, thought little on the subject ; nor had they any particular reason to view with affectionate prepossession the holy pontiff, who, in the plenitude of his apostolic authority, had made a grant of their country to foreigners. But they were now received under his sacred protection ; and taught to regard him, not merely as their spiritual father, whose decisions were infallible, and whose authority was inviolable, but as their earthly prince and sovereign, whom alone they were bound to obey. They were confirmed in these sentiments by Italian and Spanish priests, as well as by their own pastors, who had received at foreign seminaries their education, and who returned admiring the splendor of that hierarchy, which they were ambitious to re-establish. And here it is impossible not to animadvert on that narrowness of principle, and that inexpedient proscription which excluded the youth of almost a whole nation from both the

Irish and English colleges, and compelled them to go in quest of learning among a people whose prevailing maxims and opinions were hostile to civil and religious liberty. What plan could be more repete with evil, or more permanently repugnant to the improvement, happiness, and subordination of the people? They were ignorant, and we refused them the means of instruction; we accused them of ferocious barbarity, and at the same time denied them the opportunity of emerging into civilization. Thus, their attachment to that church was necessarily increased, whose universities alone afforded them all the academical education which it was in their power to obtain.

I am far from thinking that this evil is completely obviated in more modern times by the establishment of a Roman Catholic college at Maynooth. It is true, there can be no comparison between ignorant priests and catholic teachers who are enlightened and let a protestant government, by all means, support a popish seminary, rather than leave the teachers of this religion destitute of all education. But I feel persuaded, that in every point of view, a greater good would be obtained by opening the doors of the Irish university to students of every description. This measure would make protestants and popists better acquainted, and would certainly diminish

that unchristian rancour with which the minds of both parties have been sufficiently embued. It also may be presumed, without any disrespect to Maynooth, that it would afford the excluded party greater academical advantages, than at present they can enjoy.

I am aware that, in the English and Irish colleges, Roman catholics at present are allowed to attend lectures, though not permitted to take degrees: and many gentlemen do avail themselves of this privilege. But it is only a few who can be supposed willing to place themselves in circumstances where they labour under marked disabilities; where there can be little emulation, since the reward of merit is denied. The catholics, therefore, as well as all classes of dissenters, justly consider themselves as excluded from the Dublin university.

Secondly; another evil which the circumstances to which I have referred have produced, is, a general prejudice against the English government. This was the natural and necessary effect of that state of things to which allusion has now been made. The priests strengthened this impression by inculcating the most absurd of all tenets, and by associating these tenets with devotional feelings: they taught the universal monarchy of the pope, as well civil as spiritual; his authority to excom-

municate and depose princes, to absolve subjects from their oath of allegiance, and to dispense with every law of God and man, to sanctify rebellion and murder, and even to change the very nature and essential differences of vice and virtue. All this absurdity was not necessary to confirm the inveterate hostility of men to that government, which they had always conceived as foreign, from whose ministers they confessedly received many provocations, and to which they had never been fully reconciled. It is to this prejudice, which, in many instances, has not yet been effaced, that we are to trace some of the evils which afflict Ireland. Hence also it is, that the native Irish continue to dislike Englishmen. To me, in their own language, they frankly acknowledged their antipathy to this nation. They sometimes spoke of them as men who had iniquitously despoiled them of the land of their fathers, and who had, at the same time, persecuted them on account of their religion.*

Far from me be the illiberal desire of exciting prejudice against a people whose interests I sincerely wish to promote. In making these remarks, my only object is to shew, that the circumstances in which the Irish have been

* See Chapter III.

placed, had a natural tendency to produce this effect. And though this unhappy result is, I am persuaded, considerably removed already, yet it is in the power of our government to destroy it altogether. What a change in this respect was effected in the Highlands in the course of twenty years after the rebellion! Education, and that kind treatment which a liberal policy has dictated, have placed the inhabitants among the best friends to order, subordination, and government.* They are now proud to be ranked among the most faithful and efficient supporters of that illustrious house, with which is associated, in the mind of every Briton, those invaluable blessings, for which “our Hampdens and our Sidneys bled.” These are the glorious consequences of conciliating measures, of an enlightened education, and of christian instruction. In less than thirty years the same result will take place in Ireland, if the same means be employed for its production; and the millions of our fellow subjects in that country will crowd around the standard of British freedom and maintain its honour in opposition to the whole world. This is not mere speculation;

* How greatly is the public indebted to that Christian society by whose benevolent exertions these happy effects have been produced †

for the experiment has already been tried on a small scale, and the effect is such as has now been described. A native Irishman in the county of — when he read, for the first time in his life, a New Testament, which a benevolent gentleman put into his hands, exclaimed, “If I believe this, it is impossible for me to remain a rebel.” Behold the means which a beneficent providence has appointed to make good men and good citizens !

It is unnecessary to inform the people of this country, that in Ireland many of the natives have never heard of the Bible, and comparatively few of them have ever seen it. There was, indeed, a translation made of the scriptures into Irish, under the direction of Bedel, bishop of Lismore, about a hundred and forty years ago ; but most of the edition then published was distributed in the Highlands, and it has for a long time been out of print.* Ignorance and superstition of the very grossest kind prevail ; and these present a barrier to every species of improvement.† Truth obliges me to acknowledge, that some of the popish priests of the present day have endeavoured to render permanent this melancholy state of degradation.

* The British and Foreign Bible Society have lately printed an edition of the New Testament of this translation, and is now in circulation. The people receive it with gratitude.

† See note G.

By this I do not mean merely to say, that they have resisted any casual attempt to make proselytes ; for this is only that which consistency seems to require ; but they have systematically opposed the instruction of their people in any possible form. Mr. — in the parish of — when bibles were put into the hands of his parishioners ordered them, on the pain of excommunication, to commit them to the flames.— The standard of morals among people who are placed in such unfavourable circumstances must necessarily be low. Accordingly, the lower order of Roman Catholics, form their judgment in many instances, of the merit or demerit of an action, either from its supposed connection with the prison and the gallows, or from its being deemed venial or deadly by their confessor.

I am far, however, from wishing to insinuate that all the priests are of the description to which I have now referred. Many of them, no doubt, are enlightened men, and are friends of knowledge and improvement ; and to such characters, whether papists or protestants, it is consoling to think, that no influence, however powerful, and no authority, however imposing, is able to repress that desire for information, which, in some parts of Ireland, has begun to awaken and animate the inhabitants. In the progress of society there is a period, at which all opposition to its advancement in civilization

and happiness, only tends to accelerate that motion which the impulse of concurring circumstances had originally communicated.

In adverting to the causes which have obstructed the progress of the reformation in Ireland, there is one, which though of less importance, is not unworthy of notice. Ever since the conquest, and especially between the reign of Elizabeth and William, many of the native chieftains had forfeited their estates: their property was distributed among strangers, who had no influence with the people, and whose opinions in religious matters must be totally disregarded. A few of the old families still remained; but most of these were strongly attached to popery. The people were, therefore, wholly resigned to the management of priests. The progress of the reformation in the Highlands, in the first instance, was very much owing to the power and influence of the chieftains. The first of these, in point of importance, the Duke of Argyle, was distinguished for his opposition to the hateful tyranny of the Stuart family. Others, possessed of the same patriarchal authority, imitated the example which this patriotic nobleman set before them, and like him, accustomed their vassals to regard the jurisdiction of the pope as usurped and antichristian. Their power

was in those days unlimited, and their influence, as the father, friend, and protector of their people, gave an importance to their opinions on any subject, which few would presume to controvert. Accordingly, when any chieftain professed himself of the reformed religion, almost the whole of his clan immediately rejected the papal authority. But very different was the case in Ireland: the people there, in many instances, were as sheep without a shepherd; and where there was an old chieftain remaining, his authority was unfortunately all directed to confirm his people in error and superstition.

Nor had the penal statutes, by which politicians intended to diminish popery, any influence in accomplishing this end. Let us only again recal to our recollection, the circumstances in which these laws were framed, the people by whom they were administered, and the inveterate irritation of those whose conversion they were designed to effect, and we shall be fully satisfied of their pernicious rather than their salutary tendency. But as I have assigned a chapter to the distinct consideration of this subject, it were improper to enter upon it in this place.

Is it now asked what means are most likely to effect the reformation in Ireland? Those very means which ought more than a century

ago to have been employed, and which I have had occasion repeatedly to recommend in these pages : I mean moral and religious instruction. This instruction must be conveyed through the medium of that language which is understood, and by the ordinary mode of early education, as well as from the pulpit. These are the means of moral improvement, which, if prudently and extensively employed, will, in the course of a very few years, accomplish in the neighbouring isle the most important reformation.

CHAP. VIII.

ON THE PROGRESS OF ENGLISH LAW AND GOVERNMENT IN IRELAND.

THE administration of justice in any country has too much influence on the morals, the comfort, and safety of its inhabitants not to merit the most particular investigation. Nor is it enough to examine what institutions have been established, what forms of jurisprudence have been sanctioned, what code of laws has been enacted: we should inquire how these institutions are respected, and how these laws are enforced.

The few observations which it is in my power to offer on the subject of this chapter I shall arrange under the following particulars. First, I shall inquire how far the law and political institutions of England were established in the pale; secondly, make some remarks on the nature and tendency of the Brehon, or Irish laws; and thirdly, on the abolition of these laws, and the universal progress and establishment of those of England.

I. It is not very probable that those adventurers who first settled in Ireland, had any correct ideas

of civil polity of any kind. Full of the pride of their country, and possessed of those inveterate prejudices which nationality founded on a mixture of patriotism and ignorance inspire, they were determined to adhere to its general manners and customs, without perhaps any definite notion of its government. But this state of things could not long continue; irregularities would naturally occur, which must be corrected; grievances which must be redressed; and the safety of the colony required that a few simple and obvious laws should be enforced. Whilst, indeed, the English continued merely soldiers, which was for a considerable time after their original settlement, any other laws than those of the military life would be little regarded. The parent country, however, ultimately interfered, assumed the sovereignty of the conquest that had been made, and exercised its authority by appointing a governor, who should rule and protect the infant society.

The English colony experienced various fortunes, placed as it was in the bosom of a hostile, turbulent, and divided nation. Under an able and faithful lord deputy, its interests rapidly flourished; its territories were increased; its power and opulence were enlarged; and its enemies, though never wholly subjugated, were resisted and appalled. But there were various

circumstances connected with its situation, which powerfully counteracted the progress of order and civilization, and which, more than once, threatened its entire destruction. The barons, like those of every other country in Europe, were high-spirited, restless, and aspiring; their notions of civility and subordination were but little calculated for the advancement of either: and their manners, formed amid scenes of turbulence and faction, were, like the times in which they lived, rude and barbarous. At a distance from the power of the prince, their licentious ambition had scarcely any restraint; and not being awed by the presence of the monarch, they were the less anxious to yield obedience to his representative. Besides, the hostilities in which they were constantly engaged, and the opportunities of plundering with impunity which these hostilities afforded them, together with their own mutual jealousies, and feuds, and encounters, had no tendency to improve their dispositions, or to polish the asperities of their ferocious character.

It also unfortunately happened that in those times the deputies entered on their office rather to enrich themselves than to advance the public good. “ At a distance from the supreme seat of power, and with the advantage of being able to make such representations of the state of Ire-

“ land as they pleased, they acted with the less re-
 “ serve. They were generally tempted to under-
 “ take the conduct of a disordered state, for the
 “ sake of private emolument; and their object
 “ was pursued without delicacy or integrity,
 “ sometimes with inhuman violence.”* In the
 annals of Irish history previous to the reign of
 Elizabeth, few English vicegerents are mention-
 ed, whose measures were conciliating, whose
 conduct was upright, and whose administration
 successful. “ The representations of the con-
 “ duct of the Irish people sent to England were
 “ generally false and interested, to magnify the
 “ zeal of the great lords, to procure remittances
 “ for a chief governor, or to conceal the offen-
 “ ces and irregularities of either. The English
 “ vicegerents, even of the very best dispositions,
 “ were kept in ignorance during their residence,
 “ and shut up in the seat of government from
 “ any knowledge of the native Irish, or any ge-
 “ neral intercourse even with the most peaceable
 “ among them.”†

These circumstances combined, produced that
 shocking depravation of manners, that unbridled
 licentiousness, which continued and increased
 till the reign of Henry the seventh, which ena-
 bled the natives to overrun with impunity the

* Leland's History of Ireland.

* Ibid.

territories of the pale, and again to take possession of that land, which had been unjustly wrested from their fathers. The English colonists were now, for the most part, perfectly assimilated in customs, deportment, dress and superstitions, to that people whom they had originally despised.

During this period law could have little force with men who scarcely acknowledged its authority, and who certainly had never been in circumstances where they could feel its advantage. Yet, it is probable, that assemblies similar to parliaments were appointed ever since the conquest of Ireland; and it is certain, that the first printed statutes of the Irish legislature, appeared in the third year of Edward the second.* The enactments of this supreme court were often made subservient to the private purposes of the governor: the meeting itself was inconveniently frequent; and hence, to counteract these evils, the people unanimously agreed to the famous statute of Poyning. Though the English law had always been established in the pale, the manners of its inhabitants frequently made its observance impossible; many conformed to the Brehon institutions, assumed the name and appearance of the natives, since their robbe-

* Leland's History of Ireland.

ries and crimes might be expiated by an inconsiderable fine. When every vassal felt that his safety entirely depended on the military prowess of the baron to whose interests he had attached himself; and the chieftain, that his security proceeded from the number and consequence of his followers; the ordinary course of justice must have been obstructed, and its execution rendered altogether impracticable. It was to furnish a remedy for these evils, and to prevent the total extinction of the English race, that the parliament of Kilkenny made several laws, certainly severe towards the Irish, but, perhaps, necessary to the very existence of the colony. “ Still the power of the great lords
“ was superiour to the laws, who not only de-
“ spised, but openly resisted the authority of
“ government; and when disobliged by the
“ least neglect, or tempted by any prospect of
“ advantage, continued to assume the part of in-
“ dependent chieftains.”

It was not till the reign of Henry the seventh that the vigorous administration of the governor enabled him to enforce the obedience of the subject, and not till that of his successor that the territories of the pale were extended. Under this latter reign, all the old English, and many of the Irish, were partly persuaded, and partly forced to submit to the laws of England. Ex-

tensive districts both in Munster and in Connaught, were divided into counties, and to these sheriffs were appointed for the regular administration of justice. Robberies and murders were now punished capitally; order and subordination consequently began to prevail. The effects of the severe and vindictive character of Henry were felt even in Ireland; the haughty barons began to be sensible that they had no longer to deal with the weak, corrupt, and contemptible administrations of former times, and that their safety depended on the observance of those statutes and laws, whose authority they could not but acknowledge. Elizabeth was still more successful in advancing this most necessary work of reformation. She was naturally vain, and she was flattered by the prospect of making a complete and useful conquest of Ireland. Though some atrocities were committed under her reign, and more lives lost than for centuries before, she doubtless had the merit of advancing civilization, of removing obstructions to the security and happiness of the subject, and of extending the English law to the whole body of the Irish people. It is to this period, then, that we are to refer the abolition of the Brehon, and the universal establishment of the English law.

II. The Brehon laws, or laws of the judges,

which were common to all the aborigines of Ireland, consist of a few rules, suited to an early and turbulent state of society. The first of them was that of *Tanistry*, by which, on the death of a prince or chieftain, the strongest in his family, or the most accomplished according to the notions and rude manners of the times, was appointed to succeed him in his property and government. By this acknowledged maxim, it was intended that the clan should never want a powerful protector, who should avenge their injuries, and defend them from the hostile encroachment of their restless neighbours. The evils, however, which it might originally be designed to avert, it was of itself evidently calculated to perpetuate and increase: it produced feuds and animosities without number, and the contest could scarcely ever be decided without having recourse to the sword. And, perhaps, it is to this custom chiefly that we ought to attribute that imbecillity of government, and that endless division of interest, which enabled a few adventurers to achieve the conquest of Ireland.

Gavelkind, refers to a custom, or law common only to the vassals.* On the death of any member of a family, the whole stock was divided, whether it consisted of moveables or of

* See note A.

land, among all the surviving branches. The design of this law evidently was, to make provision for every individual of the clan; and also to retain a multitude of people, who should be ready to attend the chief on any emergency. But it was fraught with evil: for it must have operated as a powerful impediment to industry, and as an incentive to an inconvenient multiplication of the species. And though war, and famine, and disease, the ordinary attendants of rude society, and of an overgrown population, must have greatly tended to obviate the last of these evils, yet, it would be felt when peace, and order, and subordination, and all the other fruits of civilized society, began to prevail.

Early marriage was the natural consequence of gavelkind; since every new family was to be provided out of the common stock; at least was to have a share of the land belonging to the clan. The ordinary checks to the early union of the sexes were withdrawn; for when the hut was built, provision was already made for the future progeny.

I have had already occasion to remark, that customs, especially such as nearly regard the habits of life, remain long after the particular circumstances, from which they had their origin, are forgotten. This is more especially the case in those countries where no sudden

revolutions occur to influence the progress of society. Now, it appears to me, that though the Brehon laws have been abolished for two centuries, some of the practices on which they were founded, and some of the consequences arising out of that state of society, to which alone they could be applicable, may still be traced in Ireland. Every modern traveller in this island, has remarked the infinite division of land, the opportunities which this circumstance affords to early marriages, and consequently the vast and rapidly increasing extent of the population. The two last of these circumstances generally, if not always, result from the first; it is to the origin of this, therefore, that our chief attention should be directed. Here it is not enough to say, that the Brehon laws occasioned the introduction of the peculiarity in question: they indeed sanctioned it; but they were the result of a rude and turbulent state of society; and after they were established, their influence tended to make permanent, that which was only accidental. The truth is, the Brehon, the Allodial, and Feudal systems, are in some things very analogous, because they have had their origin in circumstances nearly, if not quite similar. On this subject the remark of Dr. Smith is undoubtedly true—"that such effects must flow from such causes."

It is very certain, that the native Irish continue to this day the practice of their fathers with regard to the division of land ; and their opinions, and prejudices, and habits, concur to make it still more permanent. The extreme facility with which they can erect a cottage, and procure potatoe land, which form all the competency they look for, induce them at an early life to form matrimonial connections, without any perplexing anxiety as to consequences. The system of dividing and letting lands, has, from the nature of the case, been much abused in modern times : it deprives the landlord of a great part of his revenue, whilst it grievously oppresses the several gradations of occupiers. It is in vain, however, to exclaim against the abuses connected with this practice ; before these can be removed the state of society must be considerably changed : knowledge and education must in some degree be enjoyed ; the desire of improving the condition must be excited ; then, both proprietors and tenants will feel the happy impulse which growing prosperity, and opulence, and comfort, communicate.

These remarks may be confirmed by a reference to the state of the Highlands fifty years ago, and by comparing it with the present improved condition of that country. A species of

Gavelkind was then very common in all the northern districts of Scotland. Not only was the land common among all the occupiers on a farm, * and consequently unimproved ; but it was divided successively among all the young branches of the several families of which the hamlet was composed. The power of the chieftain depended not on his wealth, but on the number of men he could command ; and it was his interest, therefore, to encourage population, and, at the same time, the practice by which that population must be supported. “ Mr. “ Cameron of Lochiel, whose rent never exceed-
“ ed five hundred pounds a year, carried, in
“ 1745, eight hundred of his own people into
“ the rebellion with him.” But no sooner was education generally introduced into the Highlands, and the desire of improving the condition, so powerful in human nature, excited, than this patriarchal or feudal system began to disappear ; and at the present day, there are not many traces to be discovered, either in farming, or in any other department of life, of a state of society which at so recent a period was universally predominant.

I have applied the term feudal to that species of authority and government exercised by the

* This is still the case in some parts of the Highlands.

highland chieftains, though I am aware that these existed long before the feudal system was introduced into Britain. "It is a mistake," says Dr. Smith, "to imagine that those territorial jurisdictions took their origin from the feudal law. Not only the highest jurisdictions both civil and criminal, but the power of levying troops, of coining money, and even that of making bye-laws for the government of their own people, were all rights possessed allodially by the great proprietors of land, several centuries before even the name of the feudal law was known in Europe. The authority and jurisdiction of the Saxon lords in England, appear to have been as great before the conquest, as that of any of the Norman lords after it. But the feudal law is not supposed to have become the common law of England till after the conquest."*

Let it not be supposed that the change which has taken place in the state of society in the Highlands is entirely owing to the abolition of the feudal laws. To this event, indeed, it ought to be attributed, in so far as it has removed obstacles to the progress of knowledge and civilization. This revolution, however, is, in truth, the effect of moral and religious instruction, combined with that primitive simplicity and warm-heartedness, and

* *Wealth of Nations*, Vol. II. p. 122.

that love of independence and information, which so strongly mark the character of the Highlanders.

Now, why has not the same happy result taken place in Ireland? Because its inhabitants have not been put in possession of the same enlightened education; they have not had the same moral and religious instruction. The state of society, therefore, of the sixteenth century has in some degree been continued to the present period, and has produced the whole race of middle-men, so obstructive to the agricultural improvement of the country. How then are we to get rid of this noxious tribe? By exchanging those circumstances in which they are produced for others in which they cannot possibly exist. Raise the condition of the lower orders of the people, and this effect will necessarily follow:—But how is this to be done? I still recur to the same omnipotent principle, *an enlightened education, moral and religious instruction.*

Before I leave the subject of the Brehon laws, I must take notice of the *Eric*, or the fine that was imposed on all criminals, proportioned to the degree of guilt attached to the crime. The word itself signifies a compensation;* and is

* This is evidently its signification in that passage of the Holy Scriptures, in which our Saviour says, *What shall a*

common to the Gaelic as well as to the Irish language. Its use is now almost confined solely to theology, and denotes that ransom which the Saviour paid to rescue mankind from spiritual bondage. The practice to which it refers was common at one period to the eastern nations : and it is to this that reference is made in the book of Job, where it is said, “ Skin for skin ; yea, “ all that a man hath will he give for his life.” In Ireland, the *eric* was admitted as a compensation for every crime ; the only thing left to the decision of the judge, was the extent of this fine. If the offender could not be found, the clan or family to which he belonged were obliged to give the required satisfaction to the aggrieved party ; and this ransom was divided between them and their chieftain.*

The practice of plundering and living on booty prevails among all rude nations : it is not thought dishonourable to carry off the cattle of any neighbouring hostile tribe. The people are early accustomed to pilfer ; they depend greatly for their sustenance on spoil : a habit that is common to all is thought disgraceful by none ; and the united members of the clan carry on their little plans of depredation with as much ease and

man give in exchange for his soul ? Ciod a bheir duine mar eric arson anma ?

* See note H.

self-complacency, as more polished nations burn and destroy the property of one another. Hence it is, that the Highlander who had the virtue to refuse a reward of thirty thousand pounds for the Pretender, did not conceive the less of his character for stealing a cow; and this crime, which among us is punished by death, he would consider, if, indeed, it was associated in his mind with any guilt, as expiable by an inconsiderable compensation. It was in circumstances similar to those in which this Highlander was placed that the practice of giving an *eric* had its origin; and perhaps it was the only mode that the turbulence of the times rendered practicable of forcing offenders to afford public satisfaction.

III. We have seen that the Brehon law was first abolished in Ireland, and the English established under the reign of Elizabeth. To establish a law, however, in a conquered country, or even a code of laws, and to make the people conform, so as to derive the full advantage of such an institution, are two very different things. And, accordingly, we find that many of the people of this country continued for ages after this period, to receive no advantage from the laws of that government under whose protection they had been admitted.

The object of law is to prevent the recurrence of evils which have already existed; but that it may answer this end, it must be supported by

the opinions and convictions of the people. If, for example, they are so ignorant as to discover no guilt in that deed on which it denounces punishment ; or, if generally they have no virtue to avoid its commission, then, it is certain, that the design of the law, will in a great degree be counteracted. Now, it happened, that in the reign of Elizabeth, and in that of her successor, the people were not only remarkably ignorant, but from some recent circumstances full of prejudice against English government. The penal statutes had now been enacted ; and though very gently executed, were sufficient to excite the antipathy of a people who had only begun to acknowledge the authority of a foreign power. Hosts of ecclesiastics from France and Spain arrived soon after this in Ireland, and confirmed this hostility, while they successfully attempted to render odious every thing associated with heresy. But above all, the circumstances in which the people were placed ; ignorant and turbulent, unaccustomed to yield obedience to any superior except their chieftain, rendered the introduction of any new laws hazardous, in many instances useless. Besides, by observing these laws, they were tacitly reminded, as they conceived, of their subjugation to a power, their aversion to which they often openly avowed. This prejudice has had considerable influence in retarding the progress of civilization.

On this head there is one circumstance which ought not to be omitted, since it is particularly noticed by the best of the Irish historians: I allude to the notorious corruption of the judges at the time to which I refer. “ In the provinces “ which had but just now professed to accept “ the English polity, the execution of the laws “ was rendered detestable and intolerable by the “ Queen’s officers. Sheriffs purchased their “ places ; acted, as in Connaught, with insolence and oppression ; spoiled the old inhabitants, and obliged them to recur to their native chieftains for protection.” Leland mentions the case of a Macmahon, who was accused of raising rents in a neighbouring district by force of arms, which according to the law of England, was declared to be high treason. This unhappy chieftain for an offence committed before the law which declared it capital had been established in his country, was tried, condemned by a jury said to be formed of private soldiers, and executed in two days ; to the utter consternation of his countrymen. His estate was distributed to Sir Sidney Bagnal and other adventurers. The condemnation of their chieftain confirmed the Irish in their aversion to English polity, which they considered as a system of hateful tyranny and cruelty.*

* Leland’s History of Ireland,

These nefarious practices were in a great degree discontinued under the powerful administration of Strafford, who with all his bad qualities, was certainly a benefactor to Ireland. But at his death, the commencement of a civil war, which was waged with implacable fury, which carried destruction through every part of the island, and which lasted till the reign of William, put a stop to the progress of regular government, and involved the natives in all the barbarity and calamities of former ages. This war was at once the cause and effect of prejudices and grievances which estranged the people from the English polity. Nor was that policy by which the servants of the crown regulated their conduct at all calculated to remove the former or to redress the latter. Their principle was to divide the people into two parties, that of loyal and affectionate subjects, containing only the late adventurers; and that of the disaffected and dangerous, including all the rest of the inhabitants. The people thus insulted were spirited and proud; and there was an infatuated folly, as well as a barbarous iniquity, in provoking them yet farther by injustice and oppression. The northern plantation, however justified, and well devised, was an object necessarily offensive to the pride and prejudices of the old Irish; and those among them who submitted and accepted

their portion of lands, complained, that in many instances, they had been scandalously defrauded. The revival of obsolete claims of the crown, harassing of proprietors by fictions of law, dispossessing them by fraud and circumvention, and all the various artifices of interested agents and ministers, were naturally irritating; and the public discontents must have been further inflamed by the insincerity of Charles, in evading the confirmation of (what he called) his graces; the insolence of Strafford in openly refusing it; together with the nature and manner of his proceedings against the proprietors of Connaught.*

Though the people of Ireland were completely subdued by the powerful arm of William, these prejudices and prepossessions remained: and though it is to be presumed that, in general, justice has been more impartially administered since the reign of this wise prince, yet, it is certain, that various circumstances, even since this auspicious æra, have obstructed the progress of that order, security, and civility, which are the result of equal laws. Some of these I have noticed elsewhere; † and shall now take leave

* Vide Leland, v. iii. p. 88.

† Vide Chap. On the progress of the Reformation.

of this subject by observing that in the island of Tory, in the county of Donegal, the inhabitants are still unacquainted with any other law than that of the Brehon code. They choose their chief magistrate from among themselves; and to his mandate, issued from his throne of turf, the people yield a cheerful and ready obedience. They are perfectly simple in their manners, and live as their fathers had done three centuries ago.

CHAP. IX.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—THE PENAL
CODE.

THOUGH in the foregoing chapters enough has been said to account for the slow progress of the reformation in Ireland, it may be proper to resume the consideration of the same subject as it regards the long period that has elapsed between the treaty of Limerick and the Union. This period of Irish history, which affords so many instructive examples of the ignorance and folly of man, and of the baneful consequences of bigotry and intolerance, merits a much closer and more extended investigation than the limits of this essay will admit.

The Roman Catholics of Ireland have often been accused by their protestant brethren of the most atrocious cruelty, of an inveterate rancour and malignity, of a sanguinary and treacherous disposition. During the reign of Charles the First, indeed, the leaders of the popular party found it expedient to publish such charges under every degree of aggravation, for the purpose of exciting the fury of the multitude against the measures of the king,

and facilitating the accomplishment of their own designs. Nor were these patriots at all sorry when they were informed that a formidable rebellion, chiefly among the catholics, actually existed in Ireland, since by this means the royal army was divided, the prejudices of the people were confirmed, a good opportunity presented itself for declaiming against the adherents of popery, and penal laws might be framed and executed with increasing severity. It is easy to assign reasons for their hostility to popery, independent of those just grounds of complaint which were common to all protestants. But the hatred which has subsisted between the catholics and protestants of Ireland, has been so malignant, so long continued, and so destructive in its consequences, as to render a minute investigation into its origin highly instructive.

Under the reign of Elizabeth, both native Irish and Anglo-Hibernians were engaged in rebellion; O'Neal and Tyrone in the north, and Desmond in the south; not so much on account of religion, as from restless ambition. This rebellion ended with the forfeiture of vast districts in Ulster and Munster; the former of which were given by James the First to a colony from Scotland, and the latter chiefly to Englishmen. These colonies of course were protestant. The dispossessed natives were ca-

tholics; and thus was laid a lasting ground of jealousy and resentment.—The second memorable Irish rebellion began under the reign of Charles the First. This war seems to have been chiefly carried on from religious views: the horrid massacre of the protestants with which it commenced seems to support this idea *. It was brought to a termination with a most signal vengeance on those engaged in it, by the conquering arms of Cromwell. This occasioned other forfeitures to an immense extent. The mutual antipathies of protestants and catholics were now increased beyond all bounds. The cruelties which had been committed by both parties, enkindled desires of mutual revenge: the poor catholic, who had been instigated to rebellion by Spanish and Italian priests, by grievous oppression, by seeing the lands of his fathers in the possession of strangers; who had witnessed the massacres of the usurper, or the desolations which followed the bloody footsteps of his generals; while he laid down his arms at the command of the victor, retired in silence and in sorrow to his cabin, with feelings of implacable hostility, with an earnest prayer that Heaven might avenge his wrongs; the protestant, on the other hand, who had seen some of the atrocities committed by the

* It is generally supposed that there were about 40,000 massacred on this occasion.

popish multitude, and who had heard of more,— who believed they were influenced by all the senseless dogmas of the church of Rome, that they were ever ready to destroy heretics, to overturn the established government, to place on its ruins the throne of despotism, was induced, from personal hatred, from a regard to the permanent security of his own possessions, all of which perhaps had been newly acquired, and from a solicitude for the welfare of the state, anxiously to devise every possible scheme for their oppression. It was while such views and feelings divided the population of Ireland, that the weak and deceitful James the Second appeared in that country, and commenced that civil war, which to Britain confirmed its liberties, but which to Ireland occasioned political and religious bondage.

Those who flocked to the standard and followed the fortunes of this infatuated prince, were influenced by various motives. We may easily believe that though they were ignorant for the greater part, of every religion, they were now, by the harsh and cruel measures of their enemies, fully confirmed in an inveterate attachment to the church of Rome. The king to whom they had sworn allegiance, who professed himself of the catholic faith, and the friend and protector of all its adherents, had appeared in distress among them, addressed himself to

their patriotic, their religious, and generous feelings, awakened by his calamities, the best and warmest sympathies of their nature, and found no difficulty in alluring an affectionate people to espouse the cause of a prince who was suffering, as they deemed, in the cause of truth and righteousness. But there was another motive besides religion, which had the chief influence with the greater part of his army. They expected that the act of settlement would be reversed: that by the success of James they would be put in possession of their paternal inheritance, and that their chiefs, who had been in poverty and exile, would be restored to the honours of their family, and the enjoyment of their property. As for the priests, who had the majority of the people under their controul, and who conceived that their predecessors had been most unjustly ejected from their livings, they looked for nothing less than the total overthrow of the protestant church.* They had suffered much themselves in adhering to their religion, and many of them were now ready to instigate the multitude to the commission of the most atrocious cruelties. Unfortunately that prince in whose cause they had embarked, and under whose auspices they anticipated deliverance and victory, cruel and vindictive himself, had little inclination to re-

* Sir William Petty's Political Anatomy of Ireland, p. 313.

press the impetuous fury, the unbridled licentiousness of his followers.

Their adversaries, on the other hand, were animated by the enthusiasm and desperate courage of men struggling for political existence. They expected no indulgence from those to whom they themselves had shewn so little. Besides, by the forfeitures of the act of settlement, under Charles the Second, they were in possession of some millions of acres, all of which were taken from the Irish natives.* This property could only be retained by the suppression of these natives and the total defeat of their present leader: so that James in fighting for his crown in Ireland, had not only to contend with men who were inveterate in their hatred to popery, and, therefore, desperate in their resolution, but with many whose powers of resistance were increased, from the consideration of their engaging in defence of the lands recently acquired. Never was there a conflict carried on with more determined hostility, with feelings of more implacable revenge, or with a more fearful apprehension as to the final result: and the language in which a Roman poet eloquently describes the destructive effects of that civil war—"quæ—

* Plowden's Hist. of Ireland.—The forfeitures after the battle of the Boyne amounted to 1,060,792 Irish, or 1,171,307 English acres.

divina et humana cuncta permiscuit, eoque vecordiae processit, uti studiis civilibus bellum atque vastitas Italiae finem faceret," is applicable with equal force to this.*

A race renown'd

Turn'd on themselves with their own hostile swords,
—Of blood by friends, by kindred, parents, spilt,
One common horror and promiscuous guilt.

But, see ! her hands on her own vitals seize,
And no destruction but her own can please.
Behold her fields unknowing of the plough !
Behold her palaces and towers laid low !
See where o'erthrown the massy column lies,
While weeds obscene above the cornice rise.
Here gaping wide, half-ruin'd walls remain,
There mouldering pillars nodding roots sustain.
The landscape once in various beauty spread,
With yellow harvests and the flowery mead,
Displays a wild uncultivated face,
Which bushy brakes and brambles vile disgrace.
No human footstep prints th' untrodden green,
No cheerful maid nor villager is seen.
—Nor Pyrrhus' sword, nor Cannæ's fatal field,
Such universal desolation yield. †

With the battle of the Boyne ended the hopes of James, and those of his party, with the treaty of Limerick. That treaty was in all respects most honourable to those by whom it was framed ; by the first article the rights and privileges of the whole catholic body of Ireland were maintained ; “ they shall enjoy

* Lucan, L. i.

† Rowe's Translation.

such privileges in the exercise of their religion as are consistent with the laws of Ireland ; or as they did enjoy in the reign of king Charles the Second ; and their majesties, as soon as their affairs will permit them to summon a parliament in this kingdom, will endeavour to procure the said Roman Catholics such further security in that particular, as may preserve them from any disturbance upon the account of their said religion." It was scarcely to be expected that an agreement so reasonable in itself, and so advantageous to the catholics, should long be observed by the party in power, whose abhorrence to them was violent and indiscriminate, " and which transported them to that very cruelty which had provoked this abhorrence."* Whilst they forgot or overlooked the grievous afflictions which they and their fathers occasioned the unfortunate native Irish to suffer, every circumstance united to impress their minds with the recollection of those real persecutions and exaggerated calamities which the protestants had been doomed to endure : this recollection, strengthened as it was by the most lasting of all associations, constantly excited feelings not the best in human nature, and ultimately suppressed those more generous emotions which, even towards an enemy, might, in happier circumstances, have prevailed.

* Leland, v. iii. p. 128.

But the truth is, at this period, and during some of the preceding and following ages, the most powerful minds, carried away by the popular enthusiasm of the times, scarcely allowed themselves, in their intercourse with religious opponents, to be regulated by those principles of sound policy, of equity, and benevolence, and charity, which on other occasions they avowed, and which generally had a predominating influence on their conduct. Recently awakened from the benumbing stupor of superstition, and having thrown off the yoke of false philosophy, and ecclesiastical tyranny, they exulted, with all the fondness which novelty inspires, in that liberty with which their own bold efforts had made them free; proudly indignant against that complicated hierarchy whose power and policy kept the world so long in bondage. The execution of penal laws against Roman Catholics appeared to them just, and to superficial thinkers his always appeared plausible*. They justified the severity of their conduct towards them, not by

* By this remark I am far from wishing to insinuate that all those who oppose the claims of the Catholics are superficial thinkers. Such an insinuation would discover consummate ignorance and presumption. I only mean to say that the reasoning by which Milton, the friend of liberty, and others justified the execution of the penal laws, is *prima facie* extremely plausible, and to those who always dwell on the surface of things, very satisfactory.

vindicating the propriety of religious intolerance, but by considering them as a political faction, whose principles are radically inimical to civil liberty, as well as to the nobler freedom of the mind, and whose political existence, therefore, was dangerous to the interests of any state with which they happened to be connected. This reasoning, since in some instances it may be well founded, seems rather imposing, and was sufficient to satisfy the consciences of philosophers and legislators. Its force, not merely as it regards the Catholics, but as a directing principle of conduct in any case, will be considered afterwards.

In the mean time, let us attend to the forlorn and depressed condition of the native Irish. Their chieftains are forced into exile; their lands are forfeited; and their hopes of restoring the lost honours of their nation are buried in the dust. It was during this period, when despair seems to have taken possession of every mind, that a code of penal laws was enacted against the Catholics, breathing a spirit inimical to the pure precepts of christianity, and calculated to perpetuate and aggravate that poverty and wretchedness, which already were almost insupportable. I can scarcely allow myself to trace the pernicious influence of this code on the happiness and morals of the Irish, and on the agriculture and commerce

of Ireland, especially after what has been written by Parnell and Newenham on the subject: but for the sake of those who have not seen the writings of these gentlemen, it may be necessary to make a few cursory remarks.

The penal code has had a much greater influence on the moral and political state of Ireland than most people are willing to allow. At the period in which it was framed the inhabitants of this country were certainly semi-barbarous: it has appeared in the course of this volume that their connection with England from the very beginning was little calculated to meliorate their condition, or to afford them the blessings of civilization; nor was it possible for this condition to be improved by the restrictions of the penal statutes.

These statutes, in the first place, had a manifest tendency to increase and perpetuate poverty and wretchedness. From the state in which Ireland was placed at the revolution, and from the rapid increase it has made since, in population, it is evident that nothing could raise it from its low condition, but mild and fostering laws, which would encourage agriculture and manufactures, and improve and elevate the taste of the people for all the comforts and decencies of life. But the penal code directly tended to prevent the acquisitions of this taste, since it deprived of every rational motive to exertion; of

every stimulus to industry as it regards the cultivation of the soil ; of the rewards of an elevated and well directed ambition. Besides, it should be remarked, that restrictive laws, such as those in question, though improper and injurious in every possible instance in which they can be applied, are in certain circumstances more pernicious than in others. In a country such as England, where the people are accustomed to excellent food, to comfort and cleanliness, where great progress has been made in civilization, and where the very lowest of the people have something to lose, poverty and wretchedness will inevitably be produced, but not nearly to the same extent as in a nation where the reverse of all this is the case :— Where the inhabitants are not yet elevated from barbarism, possessing neither cleanliness nor great comfort, and are contented with the low gratifications, and scanty enjoyments of savage life. In the former instance, the habits which are already formed, will continue to influence the national feeling and happiness, and to retard the progress of deterioration in opposition to any enactment of the legislature ; whereas in the latter, those very circumstances in which society are placed, when combined with political arrangements that are hostile to the general good, and with laws which depress the public mind, which discourage industry and improvement, and which give life and

vigour to the seeds of discord, will increase and perpetuate the universal calamity.

In Ireland, where the Catholics were extremely poor, there were some circumstances which still continue their operation, that encouraged and facilitated the increase of population to a prodigious extent, and which consequently augmented the sum of national misery and vice. These people, like the Israelites, multiplied when suffering under the yoke of bondage; and supposed, that by early marriages among themselves, they added to the number of the faithful, and to the strength and permanent support of the proscribed church. The customs transmitted to them from their fathers confirmed them in the same practice. But above all, that general poverty which made them contented with the potatoe as their only food, rapidly accelerated the progress of a superabundant population.* By the cultivation of

* The following passage which I have read after writing the above, appears to me so strikingly just, that I cannot help transcribing it. "Universally it will be found, that political degradation is accompanied by excessive poverty; and that the opposite state of society is the most efficient cause of the general spread of comforts among the lower classes. We have little doubt, that the political degradation of the Irish poor powerfully contributed to make them adopt potatoes as their principal food; and in the curious question whether, at a future period, the greater part of the population of Europe will be supported on potatoes? much will depend

this vegetable, and the consequent facility with which a family may have an ample supply of provisions, Ireland in the course of a century,

upon the character of the governments in which the present convulsions may terminate. The establishment of an universal despotism, and the exclusion of the lower and middle classes of society from all share in the government, by annihilating in a great degree individual importance and dignity, would have a strong tendency to make the poor submit to the lowest and cheapest sort of sustenance; and it is quite certain that if they once consent to produce an adequate supply of labour on the cheapest sort of food, they never will be able to obtain any thing better. On the other hand, if the present convulsions of the civilized world should leave behind them improved forms of government, it is probable, that the decent pride occasioned by a superior political condition, will make the lower classes of society look forward to something besides mere support, and not only prevent them from falling to potatoes, but raise the quality of their food above what it is at present. The causes which, independently of soil and climate, have actually determined the chief food of the common people in the different kingdoms of Europe, seem to have been their political state, and the periods of prosperity or adversity, with regard to the funds for the maintenance of labour, which they may have gone through. And when the character of the food has been determined in any particular country by these causes, though it continues always susceptible of change, yet it changes slowly and with difficulty, and a union of favourable circumstances is necessary to produce the effect. A country which, from a previous state of general depression, had been long in the habit of living upon the lowest kind of food, might pass through a period of considerable agricultural prosperity, and feel it chiefly in the rapid increase of population, and not in the improvement of the diet and comfort of the lower classes. On the other hand,

has more than quadrupled its inhabitants. This multiplication of the species, however, so far from contributing to the increase of national virtue and happiness, only tended to share penury and wretchedness among a greater number of individuals,—to spread more thickly a poor, and ignorant, and comfortless population over the face of the country; possessing neither the desire nor the means of bettering their condition.

For the sake of placing this idea in a clearer and more striking point of view, let us suppose that in an English country, where the lowest class of the people have recourse to poor laws, houses are provided for the poor, and that they experience no difficulty whatever in entering into workhouses or cottages whenever they choose; that they are contented with the cheap soups of Count Rumford, and never require a more nourishing or more expensive food; that every possible facility is afforded them, independent of any exertions of their own, to

a people which from a course of favourable circumstances, had been in the habit of living on the best wheaten bread, might from checks to their agriculture or commerce, suffer long and severe want, before they would consent to change their diet; and the effects of such checks would be felt rather in the retardation of the population, than in the adoption of an inferior kind of food, or a different standard of comfort.”

Edin. Rev. July, 1808. p. 352.

rear a numerous progeny, while no excitement to industry is presented to them, but are, on the other hand, nearly prohibited from raising themselves in society; it is evident that in such circumstances, population would increase with a prodigious acceleration, so as ultimately to involve the country in all the miseries of universal poverty, of famine, and pestilence. Population in this case, in place of being a blessing to a nation, would prove the greatest of all calamities. Now, population has advanced in Ireland during the last century in somewhat similar circumstances. The potatoe has answered the purpose of cheap soups: the cabin, which may be procured by a day's labour, is still more inviting than a workhouse: and the penal code has operated as a check to industry, to agricultural improvement, and to all those efforts which a people perfectly free, will make to better their condition. Hence the depressed state of the crowded population of Ireland before any of these laws were abolished; and hence also their extreme ignorance, and vice, and insubordination. It is this code which has chiefly contributed to render permanent that melancholy state of things to which Mr. Malthus alludes, when he says; "if, as in Ireland and in Spain, and many of the southern countries, the people be in so degraded a

state, as to propagate their species like brutes, totally regardless of consequences, it matters little whether they have poor laws or not. Misery in all its various forms must be the predominant check to their increase. Poor laws, indeed, will always tend to aggravate the evil, by diminishing the general resources of the country, and in such a state of things could exist only for a short time; but with or without them, no stretch of human ingenuity and exertion could rescue the people from the most extreme poverty and wretchedness.”*

In what manner and to what extent, it may be asked, could the penal laws produce that debasement of character, and that degraded state in which the people of Ireland propagate their species totally regardless of consequences, and in which, while it continues, no stretch of ingenuity and exertion can rescue them from the most extreme poverty and wretchedness? In answering this question it is only necessary to advert to the nature and manifest tendency of the penal laws, and to the state in which this country was placed when these were enacted.

On the last of these particulars, it is unnecessary to add another word to what has been

* Malthus on Population, v. ii. p. 336.

so often repeated. Every one knows that Ireland even at the revolution was in as barbarous and wretched a condition as any nation in Europe. The whole country at this period exhibited a scene of poverty and degradation, which could scarcely be surpassed even in the wilds of the Russian empire. And what are the means which were necessary to raise the people to comfort and civilization? Those only which would tend to eradicate all religious animosity, which would afford perfect freedom and security to every subject, which would encourage agriculture and commerce, and which by their benign and beneficent effect, would infuse joy and gladness into every heart. Every one capable of forming an opinion on the subject, must allow that such measures only ought to have been pursued towards Ireland. The reverse of all this, however, was the plan adopted. In place of eradicating all religious animosity, the penal laws had a direct tendency to confirm and make it lasting: in place of affording perfect freedom to every subject, and leaving the path of honour and of opulence open to merit, almost the whole native, and a very considerable part of the Anglo-Hibernian, population was proscribed: in place of encouraging agriculture and commerce by a free trade, both were depressed

by severe restrictions; and in place of elevating the people to comfort and happiness, these laws kept them in ignorance and bondage, allowing them only to propagate their species so as to increase and aggravate the national calamity.

In the second place, the penal laws had an evident tendency to increase ignorance and debasement of character. In making this remark, I have no inclination to fall into the error of those who ascribe to one cause all the evils which afflict Ireland. I have elsewhere endeavoured to shew, that no adequate means of instruction have ever been employed with respect to this unfortunate country; that it had no reformers, no friends, no patriots, who, by the dissemination of knowledge attacked the power of superstition, and raised the multitude from its enthralling yoke. But it surely requires no arguments to prove that when a people are systematically oppressed, and made to think meanly of themselves; when they are kept poor and dejected, and when their situation precludes them from indulging in the visions of anticipated deliverance; it is not probable that education will make much progress. In such circumstances, indeed, they can have no desire for knowledge; the mind is too much depressed to perceive its utility;

it is too deeply affected with the scene of struggling penury, of endless care and toil with which it is surrounded, to raise its aspirations to the fountain of light. It feels itself unhappy; and the very feeling unfits it for the vigorous exercise of its powers: its sensibility is employed in cloathing with darkness and sorrow that fair universe, which, to every other being more fortunate, seems adorned with beauty and gladness: and even when it thinks of that benign Being, whose goodness and tender mercy fill that illimitable space which he inhabits, it is with sentiments, not of devotion, tranquillity, and delight, but of painful and melancholy apprehension. When such a state of mind becomes general, what a powerful barrier does it present to the progress of knowledge!

This state of mind is produced to a greater degree in Ireland by political causes, than in any other. The sensibility of the people of that country is extreme: they are easily elated with joy, or depressed with sorrow. They are strangers to that clownish stupidity which renders the peasants of some other countries incapable of any strong emotion, and consequently they cling to superstition itself, as the object of long attachment, closer than those of less lively feelings. To persecute them for

what they consider the true religion, is the way to make their zeal for it more obstinate, and to render their opposition to every scheme of mental improvement irresistible.

But it is not merely as it regards education, that the penal laws have been injurious: their influence has been extremely hostile to the interests of morality. It is impossible for any one to travel in Ireland, without observing that they have made a character naturally open and unsuspecting, jealous, and in some instances deceitful. They have operated as a check to the exercise of the tender and endearing charities of life: they have literally attempted to divide the father against the son, and the son against the father. They have placed the people in circumstances in which prevarication and cheating are natural; in which the low vices of savage life are produced.—Perhaps it may be said that this would have been the case though the penal laws had never existed, and that all the evil with which they are fairly chargeable, is the greater permanency which they have given to circumstances favourable to immorality. And is not this evil sufficiently great? But the actual injury which they have occasioned is still greater: the people of Ireland were originally poor, but they rendered them still

poorer: the calamities of long-continued hostilities depressed them, and enured them to the commission of crimes; but *they* debased their character, and made them aliens in the land of their fathers. How could men be supposed to regard their duty to God or to man in a country, where political arrangements occasioned the feelings described in the following passage? “ The idea of a protestant in the
“ mind of a Roman catholic, and that of the
“ latter in the mind of the former, now became
“ closely associated with every idea that could
“ engender wrath, malice, and vengeance in
“ the heart of man. Each abhorred the other:
“ each longed for the extirpation of the other:
“ and it seems no wise improbable that the
“ more powerful of the two would have proceeded to still greater extremities than it
“ did, had not the government of Britain been
“ directed by a certain Machiavelian maxim,
“ which does not appear to have been wholly
“ discarded, at least before the accomplishment
“ of the union.” *

In the last place, the penal laws have essentially contributed to retard the progress of the reformation in Ireland, and consequently to injure the protestant church established in that

* Newenham's Commercial Advant. of Ireland.

country. That policy which is unjust is generally short-sighted, and often does extensive injury in a direction very different from that which is originally intended. And it seems a self-evident maxim that no party of great numerical power in a nation can be permanently depressed, without affecting the prosperous movements of the whole community with which it is connected. This remark certainly holds true in a religious point of view, as well as in a political. It may be highly expedient, on various accounts, that in a country where the majority profess christianity, a church should be established, and that its clergy should possess such immunities and privileges as may be deemed necessary to give due influence to their character: but it is so far from being essential to the existence or prosperity of this institution that dissenters should be irritated by test or penal laws, and degraded in the estimation of all their fellow-subjects, that these measures certainly retard the progress of the one, and put to extreme hazard the continuance of the other.

What is the design of an ecclesiastical establishment? No one maintains that the origin of such an institution is of divine authority. The religion, indeed, whose pure and spiritual interests it is intended to promote, comes from

heaven ; but the thing itself rests entirely on the ground of political and moral expediency : its object is to preserve in purity the christian faith, and to leave no part of the land destitute of instruction. If, however, this end can only be attained by the burning of heretics, and by depriving all dissenters of their rights as men and citizens, it is surely better to leave the preservation of the *faith* to that Almighty Providence which, in other ages, rendered its existence independent of human power. There is, indeed, something so disgusting to an ingenuous mind, so repugnant to the first rudiments of those doctrines which the Saviour of man has taught, in the endless pains and penalties which most ecclesiastical establishments have annexed to a disbelief of their creeds and confessions, that it requires a vigorous effort of understanding, and more than usual candour, to allow that the precepts inculcated in the bible are the same with those which seem to influence many of the supporters of such institutions. Hence the crowds which in such circumstances become either infidel or christian dissenters. The mind, if not perfectly inert by the poisoning influence of superstition, recoils with inexpressible abhorrence from a system, which not only attempts to fetter its own noble powers, but makes its high pre-

tensions of advancing the immortal interests of man, subservient to the support of a proscribing bigotry, of a dark and relentless policy; and perhaps either disbelieves the truth and renounces the authority of the christian religion at once, or embraces, whatever be the risk, the tenets of some persecuted sect. But it is not only inimical to the repose and happiness of mankind to support an ecclesiastical establishment by harsh and cruel measures: it is repugnant to the prosperity, if not ultimately to the existence, of the establishment itself.

In Ireland, nothing less than the power of Great Britain could have preserved so long the protestant church. That church has always had a very inconsiderable part of the population within its pale: the proportion at one time was as one to three, and is now nearly as one to four.* This seems to be the average proportion

* This growing disproportion between the protestant and catholic population may be accounted for without supposing any accession of the former to the church of Rome. For in the first place, the attempts which were made in former times to banish the catholics from towns, has rendered the usual population, chiefly catholic; and as it has been justly remarked, it is upon this part of the people, consisting of the poorest in Ireland, that the peculiar facility of increase, occasioned by the use of potatoes, has naturally operated with the greatest force. In

over the whole country. From this it is evident that the protestant religion has made no progress since its first establishment; nor in-

the second place, the inferior orders among the Protestants, wherever situated, consider themselves as holding a more elevated rank than the orders among the Catholics: they have acquired a greater regard for the comforts and decencies of life; they have consequently a degree of respectability to lose which they struggle to maintain, and the maintaining of which becomes a check to the increase of their population. “ Even the linen weavers of the “ North, who are probably among the poorest of the protestants, earn, according to Mr. Young, about double the “ wages of the labourers in husbandry; and feel so much of “ the pride belonging to a superior condition, that they “ have generally preferred emigration, to being reduced “ much below their usual rank in society, although there “ might be little chance of their wanting the means of subsistence for their families. But the humiliated Catholic, “ with no rank in society to support, has sought only these “ means of subsistence; and finding, without much difficulty, potatoes, milk, and a hovel, he has vegetated in “ the country of his ancestors, and overspread the land “ with his descendants. If to this consideration we add a “ circumstance, in which all writers seem to agree, that of “ the great encouragement given to the marriages of the “ Catholic poor by the parish priest, on account of his “ deriving a very considerable part of his revenue from “ them, we shall see no reason to be surprised at the increasing proportion of the Catholics to the Protestants. “ And there can be no doubt, that while the same causes “ continue to operate, this proportion will continue yearly “ to increase.” Edinb. Review.

deed, considering the terrors with which it was surrounded, was it possible that it should. Its adherents depended too little on the zeal and pious labours of its teachers, and a great deal too much on the efficacy of the penal statutes. In place of encountering error with the weapons of sound argument, of winning persuasion, and of a holy and blameless life, the only weapons which ought in such circumstances ever to be used, they were contented to enjoy the lucrative emoluments of the church, allowing their adversaries to be terrified or converted by the salutary influence of a proscriptive code. From the known principles of human nature, it is manifest that this plan would confirm the people in their attachment to their old superstition, and make them willing rather to relinquish their life than a religion for which they and their fathers had “suffered the loss of all things,” even of their political existence. This feeling is still kept alive among the mass of the Irish population, who not only console themselves with the consideration that they have endured wrongs for the true religion, but are in some instances singularly jealous of the intentions of those who make any efforts to enlighten their minds. Nor can it be expected, that this feeling will be entirely suppressed until the catholics and protestants are in every

respect on a level,—until every vestige of penal statutes is removed, and the privileges of the British constitution enjoyed equally by every subject.

Let the friends of the protestant church in Ireland recollect the perilous situation in which it has been placed for ages, chiefly in consequence of these statutes. The time is fully come when these can no longer afford it even this perilous protection; when it must be indebted to the more mild, and certainly more christian, means of security and defence; active and zealous exertion in forwarding the great purposes of holy instruction. Let it have recourse to these means with greater vigour than it has yet discovered, and its safety will be proportionably secure; for it will rest on the best possible basis, and answer more fully the end of its institution. It is the most egregious folly in any case to irritate dissenters from the established church, since they are likely, however mild originally may have been their principles, in consequence of such irritation, to become its inveterate and irreconcilable enemies. But in a country such as Ireland, possessing more than five millions of inhabitants, one of which only is protestant, to provoke to madness such a disproportionate multitude, implies such a degree of inconsiderate infatua-

tion and perverse short-sightedness, as no language can adequately express. The powerful aversion which such a multitude may be supposed to entertain towards the established church, though an evil of a very serious magnitude, is not the greatest which the irritating system occasions: they are extremely apt to transfer the same aversion to that government which allows its faithful subjects to be degraded and oppressed on account of their religious opinions. I am far from insinuating that this is the case; I only mean to say, that the catholic code has a tendency to produce this effect.*

That such a code in former ages should exist need not appear surprising, since the infliction of punishment in those times was universally considered the most effectual method of

* “Where men are told that they must not be elected to offices because they cannot believe in this or that speculative dogma of religion, they immediately become attached to their opinions; and the question between them and the church becomes, not a languid question of reason, but a lively question of passion. Men meet together and talk of their wrongs and their persecutions; till dissent gets from the skin into the bone, circulates with the blood, and becomes incurable.” *Edin. Rev.* Nov. 1811. If this remark be true, as it certainly is with regard to England, with how much more force does it apply to a country whose population is in circumstances similar to that of Ireland!

reclaiming or destroying heretics: persecution was not the evil of a party but of the age; it was common alike to papist and to protestant. But since theory and practice have concurred to demonstrate that the human understanding cannot be enlightened or convinced by any discription of pains and penalties, it is truly singular that this relic of the ages of intolerance, has not been superseded by a more conciliating policy. In place of this, however, it is believed by many that the abolition of it puts the protestant church in danger. Now, is it not most evident that this notion is the result of gross ignorance? What has been the chief impediment to the progress of knowledge and protestantism in Ireland? the penal code. What has rendered four millions of people hostile to the religion of the established church? the penal code. And is the continued existence of this code necessary to the safety of a church to whom it must necessarily have made so many enemies? There is something in this supposition incomprehensible to those who judge according to the ordinary principles of human action. For the only way in which it seems possible to make the protestant church permanently secure, is to make it popular, to make the utility of its establishment apparent, and to render its existence perfectly compatible with the full enjoyment of every indi-

vidual of the state, and thus to make it the object of affection and veneration, and not of dread and hatred. But these ends cannot be attained without the perpetual abolition of the penal code; and until this be accomplished, neither the church nor the state should consider themselves out of danger.

“ The Irish popery laws,” says Mr. Newenham, “ by their effects on the Roman catholic clergy tended still further to foment religious enmity.—A very great majority of them were observed to spring from the dregs of the people. Youths, probably rendered fanatic by the discipline of priests, wandered about as mendicant scholars, and thus procured the means of transporting themselves to some foreign university; where, in a state of the utmost degradation and exclusion from the company of their more respectable and enlightened fellow-students, they obtained a gratuitous education; wretched, no doubt, in the extreme; but such as was deemed to qualify them sufficiently for their future ministry. On returning to their native country, the principal literary acquisitions of which the greater part of them could boast, were a knowledge of monkish latin, of scholastic theology, of obsolete and incredible legends, and of the more sophistical arguments employed by those polemics

“ whom the early reformers had provoked :
“ paltry acquisitions, which besides were often
“ nearly lost amidst the drudgery of their profes-
“ sion. Ignorant in general of every branch of
“ polite literature; with grovelling and perverted
“ thoughts, with incorrect and obscure ideas of
“ moral obligation, unpractised in the relative
“ duties of social life, and dependent for their
“ sustenance on their professional labours; their
“ conduct as preachers of the word of God,
“ as ministers of the religion of Christ, was
“ to the last degree revolting in the minds
“ of all enlightened men; and calculated in
“ a peculiar manner, to foster the mutual
“ enmity of protestants and Roman catholics.”*

Such are some of the evils produced by the penal code. It has involved the Irish population in extreme poverty and wretchedness; in ignorance and vice; and in inveterate hostility to the protestant cause. Indeed, it appears to me that the chief obstacle which the reformation from popery has had to encounter in Ireland, and that which has given strength to every other, is the code in question. I have elsewhere said, I confess, that without education, without an improvement of moral character, every plan of melioration, though far from

* Newenham. Nat. and Com. Ad. of Irel. p. 180.

being useless, will have its operation obstructed, and comparatively do little good. But the truth is, the penal laws have had the effect of completely keeping the people in ignorance; cause and effect are here to be removed together; means are to be employed for increasing knowledge, while at the same time, the great obstacle to its progress is to be destroyed. If the people are left in moral darkness, and no effort made to enlighten, and elevate, and reform them, it is certain that emancipation of whatever kind can do them little good; but it is to be presumed that those who afford them the one blessing will extend to them the other also; that they will facilitate the progress of intelligence and virtue by imparting light, and liberty, and gladness together.

CHAP. X.

CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION.

AFTER what has been already written by others on this subject, it may seem presumptuous to entertain any hope of presenting it in a new or more interesting form: and, indeed, were it not that these pages may be read by some who are uninformed upon this head, and who neglect works of greater magnitude, I should have passed it in silence. As it is, I can only offer a few remarks in addition to those that I have advanced.

It is unnecessary to inquire minutely into those causes which prepared the way for that most important and glorious deliverance which Ireland obtained in 1782—4. This was partly occasioned by those silently operating, but eventful circumstances, which, whenever they occur in a nation that has long been oppressed, form the elements of a revolution, and render resistance to its just claims unavailing; and partly by the readiness of an enlightened ministry to do justice to the demands of a people who only requested the full possession of those powers and privileges, to the exercise and enjoyment of which, every

Briton has an indubitable right. From this period the commercial restrictions and the most grievous part of the penal code were abolished; and Ireland since has experienced all the happy effects of a rapidly increasing wealth and political importance. This growing opulence among Catholics and Protestants serves to shew, in the most striking light, the pernicious consequences of that narrow policy by which its concerns were managed in the days of its thralldom. It is now, however, compared with its former state, almost free, and this freedom has raised its rental in little more than twenty years from six millions to nearly fifteen; and has rendered its complete deliverance either from religious or political grievances infallibly certain. The silent but infinitely important revolution which it has already undergone, has opened the eyes of its inhabitants, however much divided by religious opinions, to view their real interest in its proper light,—to perceive that their disunion is the ruin of their country,—that the increase of their commerce, agriculture, and national happiness depends on their being free, perfectly free, and that, therefore, the accession of the Catholics to the full enjoyment of their rights is essential to the permanent prosperity of the whole population.

It is maintained by some of the people of this

country that what is termed Catholic emancipation can do the Irish peasantry, though it were obtained, no good; that its benefit can only extend to a few ambitious noblemen and gentlemen, and that, therefore, it is extremely absurd to force this subject so much on the public attention: and they are confirmed in this opinion by the hasty assertions of tourists, who say, that the inferior orders in Ireland are perfectly indifferent about emancipation; that few of them have ever heard of such a word, and still fewer know what is its import. This will appear to many good reasoning and altogether satisfactory.

As to the assertions of tourists, allowing them to be well founded, they certainly prove nothing. For it is very evident that the populace may in any country be very miserable, and, at the same time, not be able to mention to an inquiring stranger the remote and perhaps the principal cause of that misery. They feel the pressure of their calamities, and perhaps either blame the immediate agents by which these are occasioned, or their governors, without reflecting on the most effectual method of alleviating their sufferings, and bettering their condition. It is more natural for those of Ireland to dwell on the hard-heartedness of middlemen, on the great rise of rents, and on other evils which are ever present with them, which affect, without any intervention

of circumstances, their feelings and their comfort, than on political arrangements, of which they may possibly be very ignorant, whose operation because it is more general is less perceived, but whose influence is mighty on their character and happiness. Under the most despotic governments, where the inferior orders of the people are daily suffering, and where they are sunk in stupid ignorance, can it be supposed that they will be able to tell us accurately, the real causes of their grievances, to point out with the precision of a philosophic legislator the very sources whence their calamities proceed ; and if they should fail in this, and seem altogether ignorant on the subject, are we to conclude that no such causes truly exist ? The traveller in Ireland should endeavour to ascertain, not whether the people can talk fluently of emancipation, but whether the penal code has had any influence on their condition ; whether it has, on the one hand, produced consummate and disgusting insolence, and on the other melancholy depression ; whether it be fairly chargeable either remotely or directly with any share of the poverty, the ignorance, the vice, and the wretchedness with which this country is afflicted, and whether, consequently, its abolition would facilitate the removal of these evils.

It is not, however, true that the inferior orders of the Irish are indifferent or ignorant about

penal statutes: they know, for they must know from experience, that they and their fathers have not been treated like protestants, and that neither they nor their nobles have enjoyed the rights to which they are entitled. Their sense of grievances, it is true, arising from this quarter, cannot at this day be so strong or so perceptible as it was thirty years ago, since the most galling of these were removed at that period, and since it is probable their condition in many instances, in consequence of their deliverance, has been rather improving. Still, however, the spirit which these grievances produced, which the operations of the Catholic code as a whole occasioned, does exist, and will continue to exist in a more alarming form, until every vestige of this yoke of bondage is destroyed. It is surely folly peculiar to our own times to suppose, that by bettering the condition of the prisoners, that by taking off their irons, and affording a more plentiful supply of food, we render their future confinement delightful, and are entitled to accuse them of ingratitude and unmanageable insubordination if they are not perfectly satisfied with their prison-house. The way to remove a discontented spirit from a people who have been wronged, is to do full and immediate justice to their claims. If they have been degraded by a code of laws, it is the most impolitic and dan-

gerous method imaginable, to abolish so many of those laws as will allow them to rise a little, to acquire so much wealth, and political importance, to taste the sweets of freedom, without a full fruition of its blessings, and to interest the public feeling so much in their favour, as ultimately to obtain by force what ought to have been granted from good will. The argument of those who oppose the education of the poor, holds true for once on this head,—that it is dangerous to enlighten the inferior orders lest they become discontented with their condition. Now the spirit of this remark may be applied with some appearance of consistency by the opponents of the Catholic claims in the following manner —

“ There can be no confidence placed in Roman Catholics; some of their tenets are at variance with civil and religious liberty; they must, therefore, be kept in complete subjection: we can grant them no political right or privilege whatever, since we should only thereby open their eyes to the privations which the good of the state requires them to suffer, and invest them with a power which at some future period might render their farther subjugation impossible.”

This position might have been maintained, without any violent incongruity between the premises and conclusion, forty years ago; but now that the Catholics have privileges, and

power, and popularity, and have entwined their interests with those of their protestant brethren, it has lost its shadowy plausibility. They have got too much if we are determined to give them no more, and they have got too little to rest satisfied till they possess what they want.*

But to return to the assertions of certain tourists: I can aver from personal observation that the inferior orders in Ireland, so far from being totally indifferent to emancipation, seem incapable of being satisfied until the thing meant by it be obtained; that is, until they are placed in every respect on a level with their protestant brethren. I have met with many who could not pronounce the word emancipation because they were ignorant of English; but they seemed very sensible that they and their fathers had suffered much from Englishmen and protestants, and that they had been held by both in a species of bondage. Does not this intimate that they are not so insensible to the evils which afflict their country as some travellers would represent?

As to the opinion of these good people who

* "Our constitution is not made for great, general, proscriptive exclusions"—"and sooner or later, it will destroy them, or they will destroy it." Burke's Letter to Sir H. Langrish.

think that Catholic freedom will only benefit a few ambitious noblemen: allowing their position in general to be correct, still it is true, that if the multitude conceive it will confer on them an important blessing, it ought not to be denied them. It is a precept of inspired truth, to "cut off occasion from them which desire occasion;" and if the existence of the penal code, even in its present mutilated form, afford the occasion of discontent to a large proportion of the Irish population, then it becomes an imperious duty to abolish it, even though its abolition should confer a real benefit comparatively on few. But I am far from granting that the removal of penal laws, in whatever shape they may exist, is to the multitude an imaginary good. Is it an imaginary good to have a full share in all the privileges of Britons? Is it an imaginary good to be elevated to a level with the other subjects of the empire? Is it an imaginary good to have a fair representation in the legislative assembly? Then what we have been accustomed to regard as invaluable rights, and to hold dearer than any sublunary blessing, become a mere phantom, and are unworthy of being the subject either of joy or of sorrow.

It is true, as has been already remarked, a very considerable part of the penal code, and

that part especially which more immediately affects the inferior orders, is repealed. The Catholics enjoy the full and free exercise of their religion; they are allowed to hold places of emolument to the amount of £300 per annum; they are admitted to the practice of the bar; they may bear commissions in the army, as far as the rank of colonel, inclusive; they are permitted the free exercise of their elective franchises; and they are empowered to execute the useful and honourable functions of the magistracy. Thus far they may go and no farther: it is deemed impolitic and dangerous to allow them the exercise of the first offices of the state. I shall now shortly consider how far this disregard of their claims is just.

It certainly seems reasonable that no man should be punishable merely for his religious opinions;—and that while he is a quiet and good subject of the state he should enjoy all its benefits. This position will be generally allowed. But it is possible that a religious body may become a political faction, and may entertain sentiments hostile to the peace or existence of the community. In such a case, is it not the duty of government to watch their movements with jealousy, to lay them under restraints as to the offices which they are to

occupy, and to prevent as much as possible any injury to society from their tenets? All this seems very fair; though it must be confessed that however readily this general maxim is admitted in theory, it requires much prudence and liberality of sentiment to carry it into practice, since a government, which in other respects is good, may indulge its love of power by excluding the most meritorious of its subjects from the emoluments and offices of state on the pretence of religion. This is no imaginary case: the history of the church since the days of Constantine shews the proneness of rulers to interfere where no interference is useful or necessary, and to listen to the selfish counsels of timid ecclesiastics, in place of adhering to the enlightened dictates of a just and liberal policy. It should be laid down, therefore, as a fundamental law, which ought in no case to be violated, that for religious opinions merely, of whatever nature, no man should be liable to restraint or punishment.

It is obviously the duty of those who govern to do every thing in their power for the good of the governed. But true religion is most calculated to promote pure morality and social happiness; to make the rich look with sympathy and compassion on the distresses of the poor, and to make the poor submissive and con-

tented in the situations to which Providence has confined them;—to strengthen those principles on which all society must be founded, and consequently to facilitate the important business of legislation. It is, therefore, clearly the interest of the legislator that this religion be extensively inculcated, its sublime doctrines and elevated morality be universally believed and observed, and the character of its teachers respected and venerated by the nation. There seems no way in which this object can effectually be obtained but by an establishment.—Yet it must be confessed, that there is a danger of going too far here, as there is in every thing else; of prescribing laws in circumstances in which no laws should exist; and of making that an instrument of evil which should be the source of the greatest good.

It is a maxim in political economy, that every individual of the community should, in the prosecution of his interest, be left as perfectly unrestrained as the good of the whole society will admit; in other words, that the chief business of rulers, while they permit every man to seek his personal advantage in his own way, is to see, that in the competition which this universal pursuit of wealth and happiness will occasion, no injustice is done to any party. This maxim is violated in all ordinary cases,

when a company of merchants possess the exclusive privilege of trading to a particular country, or are allowed to monopolize the manufacture of any commodity. The superior advantages thus afforded to a few individuals occasion a positive injury to the nation to which they belong: since, in the one case, undue encouragement is given, and a considerable capital directed into a channel, into which, otherwise, it would neither naturally nor profitably go; and in the other, the community at large, in the exercise of its industry, is restrained, and prevented from freely employing its powers in the acquisition of wealth. The situation of rulers resembles somewhat that of a parent, who looks with equal affection on all his children, and who recollects that partiality to one of them, may involve a violation of his duty to the rest.

It is maintained by many that the civil magistrate should exercise the same impartial neutrality towards all religious sects;—that as, in commerce, monopoly is obviously injurious, so it is also in religion;—and as the supply of any commodity is in direct proportion to the demand, to afford a large premium for an article, of which otherwise there would be no scarcity, occasions an unnecessary expence to the state. Those who maintain this doctrine

are of course averse to an ecclesiastical establishment.

But it would be easy to prove, were this my object, and, indeed, it is already proved by the author of the *Wealth of Nations*, that there ought to be exceptions to this general rule in cases which affect the safety or the existence of the state*. The interests of religion and morality form one of those cases; these deeply affect the happiness and security of nations; and it is the duty of Rulers to provide for their support. The only question is, how this duty is to be exercised without infringing on the civil or religious rights of the people, or frustrating by intolerance the very design which the most benevolent intentions had in view to accomplish?—Now this can only be done, by permitting every man freely to follow the dictates of his own conscience, while a *premium*† is afforded by the government to that religious party of which it approves. In this, there seems little calculated

* *Wealth of Nations*, v. 2. p. 252.

† The money that is paid for the support of an ecclesiastical establishment, no true Christian, however much he may disapprove of the established church, can reasonably object to, since it is to be considered merely as a tax which the government of the country thinks fit to impose on the inhabitants.

to foster the spirit of a proscribing corporation ; since it is understood that all religious sects, while good subjects, are equally protected by the laws of their country, and that the premium is given to one of these sects solely for the purpose of ensuring to the whole population in the remotest corners of the land the blessings of moral instruction. Indeed, the more free all parties are in the exercise of their religion, not only are the interests of the established church more secure, but the community at large, by the emulation which is produced, is better served.

But if it be contrary to the natural rights of men, that they should in any case whatever be restrained in the exercise of religion, it is equally contrary to expediency and sound policy that the Roman Catholics should be punished by the loss of any of their civil rights for adhering to their own theological opinions. —I am aware that it is said, as has been already remarked, that the Catholics are not punished on account of their religious tenets, but as a political faction—as holding sentiments inimical to the welfare of the state. Now, without waiting to shew the inexpediency in many instances, if not in every instance, of punishing (for all proscriptive exclusion from offices of trust is in itself obviously a punish-

ment) on account of opinions *merely*, unless they are evidently treasonable; and taking it for granted that the question of Catholic emancipation is entirely political, I shall proceed to make a very few observations on it in this light.

In the first place, then, Catholic emancipation, or a full and an eternal repeal of the penal code, *is not inimical* to the safety of the state whether civil or religious. This has been often proved; and it is really irksome to go over ground that of all others is the most common place. It is scarcely possible to entertain the hope of ever presenting the subject in a new light.

It would be almost enough to say in support of this position, that the repeal of the penal laws can occasion no injury to the state, since the ground on which they were originally framed no longer exists. While that unfortunate family who were most righteously declared incapable of sitting on the British throne continued to urge their pretensions, a regard to the security of the constitution, and to the invaluable privileges which that constitution ensures, might render proper the adoption of measures towards their adherents which, in other circumstances, would be neither just nor expedient. And though it has never been proved

that the Irish Catholics have continued the adherents of that family, except, indeed, when they supported the cause of James the seventh, to whom they had sworn allegiance, yet, it was inferred, and the inference has been deemed sufficient to justify the political depressions of this people. But the time is now come, or rather it was come many years ago, when this ground for intolerance is removed:—it is removed, not merely in the extinction of the Stuart family, but by the steady and loyal conduct of the Catholics for the last century. When suffering under a code, which all will allow to have been disgraceful to human nature, they exhibited a degree of resignation which it is impossible not to admire, and a patient endurance with which there are few parallels in the history of nations. They have surely proved by a length of time sufficiently long, that it is possible to be Catholics, and at the same time to be good subjects, in a protestant country;—that spiritual submission to the pope, and allegiance to the king are very compatible.

There is not a more seducing, and, therefore, not a more common error, than that of forming a judgement of the opinions and dispositions of religious sects in the present day, from the conduct and maxims by which they were cha-

racterised in former ages. The influence of advancing civilization, is so powerful in counteracting the effect of absurd or illiberal principles, as to render the conduct of those who hold them, merely because they were held by their ancestors before them, not dissimilar to that of their fellow citizens. “The church of Rome, in the middle ages, was as intolerant as worldly ambition and religious bigotry could render her; but this was not so much the natural consequence of her tenets, as the result of the state of the human mind in those times. She persecuted the Albigenses in the twelfth century, because it was the twelfth century; because toleration had not been proved in theory, and tried in practice, to be the best means of preserving quiet, and securing truth.”—We have seen in modern times, in the Cantons of Switzerland, the Catholics and Protestants living together as brethren; and were we to judge from the tranquillity and harmony which prevailed in these small republics, we should conclude that the inhabitants were all of one religion.

The truth is, a persecuting spirit is not necessarily connected with any system of religious belief. When fanaticism acquires the ascendancy in any country, so that knowledge, and truth, and gentleness of manners are disregarded; and this fanaticism, (it is of no consequence

whether called popery or protestantism) is supported by a selfish and an ignorant priesthood, recourse will very naturally be had to the burning of heretics. If the spirit of persecution is to cease from the earth, and the very remembrance of it is to be transmitted to future ages only for the purpose of illustrating the folly and the weakness of man, this revolution in the history of the world is to be effected, not by the continuance of penal laws, but by the education of all ranks of the people, and the general diffusion of knowledge. Make the people rational; let them feel that they are partakers of the same common nature with the philosopher, and that like him they have powers of mind, which if morally improved, will raise them to immortality; and tenets of intolerance and of proscribing bigotry will be found in future only in obsolete creeds, or articles of belief: the evil genius of persecution will no longer disturb the happiness or disgrace the character of man.

Why then are we afraid to admit the Catholics of Ireland to a full participation of the benefits of the state? Is it because as papists, they must be supposed to hold sentiments hostile to the interests of the Established Church? What are these sentiments. One, no doubt, is, that Catholics can hold no faith with heretics; and that whenever they acquire influence and power they

will lend themselves to the work of destruction. This is a mere conceit; it serves the purposes of a party and not of truth; and though fully believed by the populace, it is difficult to admit that it can bias the judgement of any one who has reflected on the subject. For, if this really be their opinion, why have they not acted upon it during the last century? If they can so easily violate their obligations to protestants, why have they not taken every oath which protestants have chosen to impose on them? But they solemnly renounce this absurd sentiment in all its bearings; and the imputation of it in future, therefore, must proceed either from ignorance, or wickedness: especially, since the practice as well as the profession of Catholics are so directly opposed to its admission.

It is alleged, indeed, that were papists allowed to hold commissions in the army, they would attempt to introduce popery through a military channel: that is, a few colonels would render the army subservient to their own designs, and overturn the establishment in church and state. Is this case probable or possible? What could they do against the whole protestant population? At present this population is divided in opinion; but in that case, they would be powerfully united in opposition. Let the Catholics obtain all the privileges to which

they are fairly entitled, or in other words, let them have all that it is politic and expedient to give them, (and it is highly expedient to give them all that they now ask,) and if they should attempt by violence or by fraud to get possession of more, their attempts will be repelled and frustrated by the undivided energies of protestants.

I cannot help remarking, that in this and in many other objections to Catholic emancipation, it is supposed that the zeal of papists will accomplish every thing, while that of Protestants will do nothing. For, independent of the consideration of truth being on our side, we have the same advantage over them in our ecclesiastical establishments that a person living in possession of the market has over a new competitor. If their religion will lead them to use every exertion to make proselytes, surely ours, if we really believe it to be more conformable to the scriptures, will induce us to be equally zealous, and will constrain us, in the spirit of meekness and christian charity, to attempt the instruction of those whom we conceive to be in error.—Besides, the repeal of the penal laws, paradoxical as it may seem, will evidently do more injury to the cause of popery than to that of protestantism: it will divide those who were formerly united as fellow sufferers, and who, because they conceived themselves persecuted, hated the religion of

their persecutors. The friends of the established Church have nothing to fear from Catholic emancipation, if they will only use those *weapons of warfare which are not carnal, but mighty through God* ; if they will shew a willingness to contend with popery, not when they have secured so disproportionately the vantage ground, but by descending from their fastnesses, to the more equal combat of the plain; not when they are surrounded by the terrors of a penal code, and therefore, of necessity invulnerable, but when they depend chiefly for the victory, on the truth and righteousness of their cause, and on the piety, and sanctity, and zeal, of their teachers.

As to the apprehension of Catholics introducing popery through the medium of Parliament, it seems altogether unfounded; since there must always be a great majority of Protestants in both Houses, who would resist every attempt to change the ecclesiastical part of the British constitution, even though "places, and ribbons, pensions and sinecures, and further elevation in the peerage," were held up to their consideration. Indeed, such a change as this, though the protestant members of parliament were to decline the execution of their duty, it is impossible to accomplish: it would kindle the indignation of all classes of

the community; it would again precipitate the Catholics into the very bondage from which they had risen; and in the honest prejudices of the people, would be found a most powerful barrier to their future restoration. But why suppose, that the Catholics must necessarily wish the destruction of the Church establishment? May they not be zealous, and at the same time possess prudence and principle? Or if they are so anxious to overturn the protestant church, why do they not at present take all the oaths, which preclude their entrance on the higher offices of state? For, if they can unite in accomplishing its destruction when they are in Parliament, and after they have taken an oath that they will engage in nothing contrary to the security of our church establishment, the same want of integrity would surely lead them to take any oath, that might facilitate the execution of this darling object.

Some persons, who express the sentiments of a considerable party on this subject, acknowledge, that they would feel little indisposition to the admission of Catholics to political power, if they were not afraid of seeing a popish establishment; and would have no particle of objection to the extension of the like privilege to Dissenters, if they could be secure of the maintenance of our church establishment. This

manifests a most laudable anxiety: could there reasonably be apprehended any danger to the church from the repeal of the penal laws, then, certainly, it is better that these laws should continue in force. But when the moral impossibility of danger arising from Catholic emancipation is considered, and at the same time, the incalculable advantages which must flow to the empire from this measure, it seems desirable that this anxiety, originally just in itself, should be kept within proper bounds. For how can a few Catholic noblemen and gentlemen overturn the protestant church, either in the Parliament, or in the army, either by violence, or by fraud? Before they can accomplish this, the majority of both the army and the Parliament must be converted to popery: they must enter into a conspiracy for this purpose, not merely among themselves, but also with the sons of our ecclesiastical establishment. They can never injure the Church if she is faithful to herself; and if she should be otherwise, the existence of penal laws will not necessarily save her.

But in order to provide fully for the security of the Church, let every Roman Catholic on his entering upon office, take an oath that he will enter into no plan or conspiracy for the destruction of the Church, established

throughout the empire. This no Catholic will object to take, while it will afford some satisfaction to Protestants.

The most popular objection to Catholic emancipation is, that while the authority of a foreign power is admitted by Papists, their admission into the legislative assembly, or into offices of great importance, is unsafe. Now, it should be recollected that they have renounced the deposing power of the pope, and the doctrine of keeping no faith with heretics. The only power which they acknowledge in the Pope is purely spiritual; and if it be purely spiritual, it little imports the state, as far as its temporal interests are concerned, where that power is lodged,—whether with the Patriarch of Moscow, or the Pope of Rome, provided the state is satisfied with such pledges as Catholics are called upon to give, in the oaths of 1791 and 1793: in which they declare, “that they do not believe that the Pope of Rome, or any other foreign prince, prelate, state, or potentate, hath, or ought to have, any temporal or civil jurisdiction, power, superiority or pre-eminence, directly or indirectly, within this realm.” It is contended, therefore, the independency of this purely spiritual supremacy, admitted in the person of a foreign prelate, or rather in the church of which he is con-

sidered as the chief organ, can, in no manner whatever, interfere with the duties of allegiance to a temporal sovereign. The Kirk of Scotland maintains a supremacy equally independent of the temporal jurisdiction of the crown. The General Assembly considers itself paramount in its definitions of doctrine and decrees of discipline, and convokes and dissolves itself. The King's commission is not allowed to possess any authority or controul over the acts of Assembly. This power claimed by the Church of Rome, as distinct and independent of all temporal authority, we have seen admitted by the most jealous legislatures; and not inconsistently with this acknowledgement, we know that Catholic princes have waged war against the Pope himself, and reduced him to the state of a prisoner in his capital. —But in admitting the existence of this spiritual supremacy of the see of Rome, Catholics do not even admit that the Pope shall himself elect and nominate all bishops, as in some ages, pontiffs have assumed a right to do, in the same manner as they exercised other powers which have not even by human authorities been considered as legitimately inherent in them*.

* Sir John Hippesley's Tract on the Catholic Petition, p. 19.

In the second place, a full repeal of the penal code will greatly conduce to the happiness, the strength, and glory of the British empire.

It will most obviously have this effect on Ireland, by facilitating its moral improvement. It has been remarked more than once in the course of these pages, that one circumstance which has greatly contributed to retard this improvement is, the discontented spirit which prevails among the inhabitants, and the distraction and disaffection, which this spirit produces. The removal of this evil, therefore, should form a prominent part of any legislative measure, which has for its object the permanent amelioration of Ireland. To remove this entirely and at once, is, indeed, impossible; since the system of farming agents or middlemen, which has its origin in the low state in which capital exists in the country, and over which government can have no controul, is the fruitful source of much vexation: this arrangement will only yield to the slow but effectual change, which accompanies the progress of wealth. But it is in the power of government to remove one source of grievance,—that which degrades the native Irish, and renders them the enemies of the English character; that which divides the inhabitants

of a country, and which makes them suspect and dislike one another,—and that from which a thousand other nameless evils proceed. Indeed, unless this important revolution is accomplished, the protestant teachers and preachers must continue to encounter very great difficulties in their labours: till then, the prejudices of the people will not subside: they will still conceive themselves oppressed, and regard with distrust the means employed for their improvement: they will still think that as protestants, they must of course be the friends of the government, and the enemies of Catholics. I recollect no question which the native Irish more frequently asked,—and this they asked with reserve and solicitude,—than whether I were employed by government. They have a propensity to suspect the intentions of benevolence itself, when exercised under such patronage.*

* “Where popular discontents have been very prevalent, it may be well affirmed and supported, that there has been generally something found amiss in the constitution, or in the conduct of government. The people have no interest in disorder. When they do wrong it is their error, not their crime. But with the governing part of the state, it is far otherwise. They certainly may act by ill design, as well as by mistake.”

Burke's *Thoughts on the Cause of the present Discontents.*

In reflecting on this circumstance, it is impossible not to regret the existence of causes by which this state of mind may have been occasioned. But why must it last for ever? Why should not the most affectionate people in the world place the fullest confidence in the best of all constitutions? Remove the penal code—restore them to power, to liberty, to happiness and life, and their murmurings will vanish like the mists of their native isle before the rising sun; their warm affections will cling with enthusiastic ardour to the government which brings them deliverance; and the remotest glens and recesses of Ireland will pour forth her sons, gallant and free, who with grateful emotions will engage in the combat which must decide the destiny of the world.—Break down this “middle wall of partition,” the existence of which is more galling to catholic feelings than that which formerly separated Jew and Gentile, could in any circumstances be to the worshipper of Jupiter, “the stranger to the commonwealth of Israel,”—and every facility will be afforded to the universal education of youth, to the moral and religious instruction of the inferior orders of the Irish, and to the successful execution of every plan which has for its object the improvement of this people.

Besides, by the repeal of the penal code, as has been often remarked, a much greater share of talent will be employed in the service of the country: the path to honour, and opulence, and fame, will be open to the ambition of aspiring minds. And surely, if a nation of free men is more powerful than a nation of slaves, chiefly by its intellectual energies, every plan by which these energies may be enlarged, providing it be consistent with the principles of the constitution, should be zealously adopted. If there ever was one period more than another in which this duty was imperious, it is the present. And yet, it is common to acknowledge the duty in general, as it regards the emancipation of the catholics, while the immediate propriety of putting it in execution is denied. This reasoning I confess myself unable to comprehend; indeed, I question much whether it has any meaning. For, the propriety of instantly discharging a duty which is founded on justice and sound policy, seems self-evident. In the present case, not merely the propriety but the necessity of speedily attending to the obligation urges itself on the attention. The distracted state of Ireland demands it,—the prostrate nations of Europe demand it,—the power and unprincipled ambition of the Tyrant demands it;—

and Britain, amid the general wreck with which she is surrounded—Britain, still raising her head amid the storm, and daring to be free, demands it.—What infatuation! while contending for our lives, our liberties, and for the consecrated land, dearer than all, which contains the ashes of our fathers,—in which are the sepulchres of those patriots, and heroes, and legislators, who on the field or on the scaffold poured their blood, an oblation to that Freedom which their sons enjoy:—while the storm seems still gathering, and scarcely leaves in the destructive course through which it moves, one solitary land in which the remains of all that makes man like Him who made him, may obtain a secure asylum, shall we hesitate whether to allow our brethren, our kinsmen, *with the same privileges which we enjoy*, to share with us the danger and the glory of saving our country, or perishing amid her ruins?

On the question now at issue depends, it may be, the fate of Ireland, and of the whole British empire. Four millions of our fellow subjects ask for privileges, to which they, together with a large part of the remaining population, conceive themselves fairly entitled. Let the dreadful consequences of irritating so many people, be fairly weighed before their petition

be rejected. Every year's delay to their claims increases the dissensions of their country, and must increase also the military force by which the inhabitants are kept in subjection. And how can such a force be spared in the present situation of Britain?—Let us fully impress on our minds the duty which Almighty Providence has called upon us to discharge to ourselves, to the world, and to posterity, before we render our exertions fruitless by making enemies in our own country. “Freedom, driven from every
“ spot on the continent, has sought an asylum
“ in a country which she always chose for her
“ favourite abode : but she is pursued even here,
“ and threatened with destruction. The inun-
“ dation of lawless power, after covering the
“ whole earth, threatens to follow us here ; and
“ we are most exactly, most critically placed
“ in the only aperture where it can be success-
“ fully repelled ; in the Thermopylæ of the uni-
“ verse. As far as the interests of freedom are
“ concerned, the most important by far of sub-
“ lunary interests, we stand in the capacity of
“ the fœderal representatives of the human race ;
“ for in us it is to determine (under God) in
“ what condition the latest posterity shall be
“ born ; their fortunes are entrusted to our
“ hands ; and on our conduct, at this moment,
“ depends the colour and complexion of their

“ destiny. If Liberty, after being extinguished
“ on the continent, is suffered to expire here,
“ whence is it ever to emerge in the midst of
“ that thick night that will invest it? It re-
“ mains with us, then, to determine, whether
“ that freedom, at whose voice the kingdoms
“ of Europe awoke from the sleep of ages, to
“ run a career of virtuous emulation in every
“ thing great and good; the freedom which
“ dispelled the mists of superstition, and in-
“ vited the nations to behold their God; whose
“ magic touch kindled the rays of genius, the
“ enthusiasm of poetry, and the flame of elo-
“ quence; the freedom which poured into our
“ lap opulence and arts, and embellished life
“ with innumerable institutions and improve-
“ ments, till it became a theatre of wonders;
“ it is for us to decide whether this freedom
“ shall yet survive, or be covered with a funeral
“ pall, and wrapt in eternal gloom.” *

* Hall's Sermon on the present Crisis.

CHAP. XI.

ON THE MEANS WHICH SHOULD BE EMPLOYED FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF THE NATIVE IRISH.

SECTION I.

General Remarks on the Advantages of National Education.

I SHALL not here repeat the remarks by which it was endeavoured to prove the inefficiency of those means which have occasionally been used to enlighten the old Irish, and the absurdity of attempting to improve their minds by addressing them in a language which they do not understand. Taking this truth for granted, which, indeed, nothing but the grossest prejudice and misconception could ever controvert, I proceed to inquire into the measures which should be adopted for extending to the whole population of Ireland, all the blessings of moral and religious improvement. The most obvious means for accomplishing this end are education and preaching.

1. Education.—The importance of this means of national improvement is much less understood than is generally imagined,* and seems no where to be so universally acknowledged as in Scotland.† Here, indeed, its utility has for a long time been fully demonstrated: it has produced in the mass of the people, industry, virtue, and happiness, and has conferred on them that proud pre-eminence of intellectual endowment by which they are distinguished above all the nations of the globe. We never expect, therefore, from a native of this country to hear any arguments advanced against the manifest advantage of a general system of education,—a system adapted to enlighten and instruct the very lowest orders of the people. It is from men who have never witnessed the happy effects which a plan of elementary tuition produces; or, who are so selfish as to grudge their fellow creatures that augmentation of domestic happiness which knowledge imparts, or, so corrupt and tyrannical as to dread the progressive improvement of society, and the ameliorating influence of increased illumination; it is from such persons only that it is possible for us ever to hear arguments of this descrip-

* See note F.

† This was written before the formation of the national institution in England.

tion. There may, indeed, be a few in every country whose understandings are so obtuse as not to perceive the force of the strongest evidence, and who obstinately retain all the prejudices of the last century in spite of every attempt to remove them. To such characters I do not address myself. But to those who oppose the education of the poor merely because they are ignorant of its advantage, and who really have every wish to promote the general happiness of mankind, I offer the following remarks, common place enough, no doubt, but nevertheless of very great importance.

In the first place, it is evident that the diffusion of knowledge among the inferior orders of the community, by means of a national system of education, must necessarily advance the interests of morality. Ignorance, indolence, penury, and vice, are not more closely allied, than intelligence, industry, purity of manners, and a watchful attention to all the duties of life. It is possible, no doubt, to communicate a species of knowledge, or rather to put it in the power of every individual to acquire it for himself, without improving to any great extent the morals of the people. But the system of education which I recommend, embraces the pure morality which

christianity inculcates : which, while it teaches the children of the poor to read, at the same time unfolds those principles of truth, and justice, and piety, by which their early habits are formed, and their future life is to be guided. Much, indeed, has been said as to the abuse to which general education is liable, —that it puts it in the power of the poor to read books impure and pernicious, and as they have not the judgement to choose what is good, so they ought not to have an opportunity of contaminating their minds with that which is bad. But those who make this remark should recollect that there is no blessing but what may be misapplied, no power but what may be perverted, no good without some mixture of evil : besides, if the objection has any force when applied to the case of the poor, why may it not have some validity when adduced to shew the dangerous tendency of education even in the rich. Has an Almighty Providence distinguished the latter from the former by a marked superiority of mental endowment, by any greater perspicacity of judgement, by any livelier susceptibility of virtuous emotion, or by any stronger aptitude for the attainment of moral excellence. It has, no doubt, in the one case more liberally than in the other, bestowed the external means of becoming wise,

and learned, and happy ; but the gifts of nature are not like those of fortune ; her bounty is distributed with an impartial hand ; and the cottage or the cabin may contain as much native genius and virtue, as the splendid mansion, or the academic halls of the College.

Full many a gem, of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear ;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

But it is not true that the poor when capable of reading prefer in general pernicious to useful books. When their education has been tolerably well directed, they discover a much stronger inclination to procure such as contain useful information,—as inculcate the principles of piety and virtue. Let us in this case, as in every other, where it is in our power, appeal to observation. In Scotland, where all the people can read, are their morals injured by their capability of perusing improper books? In what other country in the whole world is education so general, and where is the country that can bear any comparison as to sobriety, and industry, and national virtue? Here, even the beggar is ashamed if he be unable to read that book which affords the most endearing consolations, and hopes, and enjoyments alike

to the rich and the poor;—if he be unable to inform his offspring from the sacred pages of their duties and their destiny, and remind them of the holy perfections of that awful Being whom they are ever to fear, whose favour is life, and whose final approbation is, amid all the pressures of poverty and want, to be the object of their constant solicitude and prayer. Compare this lovely picture with the poverty, ignorance, and vice of the peasantry of Ireland. There, reading cannot possibly injure the morals, since there are few who can read; and yet, the enemies of education, so far from discovering any superior innocency of manners, will find the perpetration of crimes much more frequent, because the moral feelings are perverted by the deadly influence of a baneful superstition.—The truth is, reading is the chief security of the poor against moral, political, and religious error. The contamination is always in their way; is it not proper, then, to provide an antidote?

It were, indeed, singular if the diffusion of the best of all knowledge had any other tendency than the advancement of the best of all objects. Have the thousands, whom the benevolent exertions of Lancaster have extricated from ignorance and vice, and to whom he has imparted the art of reading, been rendered less

attentive by their education to the duties of life, less obedient to existing authorities, less useful, or contented, or virtuous? On the contrary, have they not been rendered better men, better members of Society; not one of them has hitherto been accused of any crime. This is a proud and imperishable testimony to the incalculable advantage of early instruction,—to the excellencies of his system who has consecrated his talents to the noble office of consoling, instructing, and reforming the poor and the forgotten.—If, then, it be the duty of rulers to prevent guilt rather than to punish it, to make the people obedient from choice rather than from constraint, by persuasion rather than by power, the obligation of affording the means of instruction to all the children of the state becomes palpably evident, and awefully imperious. Indeed, there seems to be no small degree of infatuation in leaving the minds of that class of the community on which the strength and improvement of every nation chiefly depends, altogether untutored, exposed to the casual associations and impressions of those circumstances to which their destiny has confined them, and of permitting them thus to become the dupes of seditious and designing men,—to become the fitter instruments for the **perpetration of those crimes which**

sometimes overturn established governments, and obstruct or destroy the happiness of civilised society. A national system of education, the best means for an extensive diffusion of knowledge, has a tendency to prevent the occurrence of these evils; since it is necessarily subservient to the advancement of order, virtue, and happiness.

“ These are not the times in which it is
“ safe for a nation to repose on the lap of
“ ignorance. If there ever were a season, when
“ public tranquillity was ensured by the absence
“ of knowledge, that season is past. The
“ convulsed state of the world will not permit
“ unthinking stupidity to sleep, without being
“ appalled by phantoms, and shaken by terrors,
“ to which reason, which defines her objects,
“ and limits her apprehensions, by the reality
“ of things, is a stranger. Every thing in the
“ condition of mankind, announces the approach
“ of some great crisis, for which nothing can
“ prepare us but the diffusion of knowledge,
“ probity, and the fear of the Lord. While
“ the world is impelled with such violence in
“ opposite directions; while a spirit of giddi-
“ ness and revolt is shed upon the nations,
“ and the seeds of mutation so thickly sown;
“ the improvement of the mass of the people
“ will be our grand security, in the neglect of

“ which the politeness, the refinement, and
“ knowledge accumulated in the higher orders,
“ weak and unprotected, will be exposed to im-
“ minent danger, and perish like a garland in
“ the grasp of popular fury. *Wisdom and*
“ *knowledge shall be the stability of the times,*
“ *and strength of salvation ; the fear of the Lord*
“ *is his treasure.*”*

In the second place, a general system of education has a tendency to promote national wealth and improvement. Though this remark may have been anticipated by the foregoing, its illustration will suggest some views which, though not often adverted to, merit considerable attention.

For example, it will scarcely be denied, that a nation where moral and religious knowledge is spread among all the orders of the people, is more likely to advance in every species of agricultural and manufacturing improvement than one where intelligence of every kind is almost exclusively confined to the higher or even the middling ranks. And the reason is very obvious; in the one case, the force of prejudice is destroyed, an enterprising spirit is excited, which will either surmount or remove

* Hall's Sermon on the Advantages of Education to the Poor.

existing difficulties, and which, while it only seeks its own opulence and honour, enriches by its exertions the country in which it is cherished ; whereas, in the other case, the various classes in their several departments adhere with undeviating sameness, and obstinate attachment, to the beaten track in which their fathers trod, having little anxiety either to better their own condition, or that of the community to which they belong. Here, there is no stimulus to excite the latent genius of those powerful minds, which nature has not confined to any condition, and which, in other circumstances, might have conferred lasting benefits on their own age, and on posterity : they are buried in that tranquil obscurity, that inglorious repose, that negative kind of enjoyment, to which, but for the ignorance and benumbing torpor that pervade the nation in which they live, they never could have been doomed. And yet, there are many who contend for a continuance of this state of things, who oppose the education of the poor, because it tends to remove the evil to which I have referred. They suppose that by affording the means of instruction to the inferior orders of society, many will attempt to better their condition, and place themselves in a higher rank, while all will become discontented, and be unwilling to

perform any species of labour which they can possibly avoid.

This supposition is partly true and partly erroneous. It is undoubtedly true, that a national system of education, to which the very poorest may have access, will bring forward many individuals, who, by their industry, or their original genius, or their strength and patience of intellectual exertion, will elevate themselves to an order of society far above that in which they were originally placed. But surely it is not necessary for ever to be proving that this is an advantage to the community at large; that by this means, national wealth, and improvement, and civilization are advanced. Has not the public a better chance of being well supplied with a commodity that is manufactured by many rivals, and brought in great abundance to the market, than if its manufacture were solely confined to the monopoly of an opulent company of merchants? In like manner, is it not more probable that the public will in all respects be better served, when no branch of the community is excluded from knowledge and cultivation, and when, consequently, a profusion of talent is brought to the market? During a scarcity of this article, it happens, as in scarcities of every kind, that purchasers have little or no

choice; they must either take the commodity, though of a high price and bad quality, or want. It may be, indeed, that individuals may find their interest in such a state of things, just as it is the personal interest of the farmer, that he only of all the farmers in the country should have a good harvest, and of a merchant, whose ships are laden with foreign produce, that no other ships with the same commodity should reach the destined haven but his own; but as it is in no conceivable instance for the advantage of the community that either the harvest should be bad, or that the price of the market should not be depressed by the ample supply of importation, so it never can be its interest that the public service should experience any scarcity of cultivated mind. On the other hand, this service will be best advanced, and done at least expence, when the supply is most ample.

It manifestly then is the duty of a nation to encourage those means by which this ample supply may be obtained; in the same manner as it is its interest to favour the production of any commodity which is essentially necessary to its comfort and prosperity. Now, a national system of education is one means by which this important end may be accomplished; since

it affords to all an opportunity of improvement, and to the few whom nature has blessed with superior powers, the possibility of rising to benefit the public, and to advance their fortune. As things are at present, in most nations, the great mass of the people is completely excluded from serving the state by intellectual exertion; this is confined to two or three of the most elevated orders of society, where there is little competition, and where, of course, the work performed is inferior, both in quantity and quality, to what, in other circumstances, it would have been. When once, however, this wall of partition is broken down, I mean as it regards intelligence, a new spirit will diffuse itself through society, and those who are now the sole possessors of cultivated talents, may find themselves surpassed in a quarter, where by them it was least expected.

Those who are at present candidates for literary fame, need not, after all, be much alarmed at the consequences of a national system of education; since such a system can only embrace the most elementary branches of tuition; and, since merit alone can find its way amidst the pressure and difficulties which poverty involves, and genius only animate the dreariness of the prospect which a "destiny

obscure" and unpatronised, affords.* There may, and there certainly will, be a strong desire excited to improve the condition, and this will induce the various classes of society to acquire those accomplishments by which this end may be obtained: still, however, it is not probable that many from the lower orders will supplant those who are already in possession of the market, unless they bring to it a better commodity, and perhaps sell it at an inferior price.

But supposing that the state were not to derive direct advantage from the education of the poor, to the extent which I contend for, it still would be its interest on the acknowledged principles of political expediency, that no member of the community should remain altogether uninstructed. The benefit it confers may, indeed, be chiefly indirect, but it is nevertheless very great, since it excites an inextinguishable aspiration after general improvement, which discovers itself by its ameliorating influence on the various conditions and ranks of society. And though its effects on the national morals has been formerly noticed, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of remarking in the words of

* *Haud facile emergunt quorum virtutibus obstat
Res angusta domi.....Juvenal.*

Dr. Adam Smith: That the state derives no inconsiderable advantage from the instruction of the inferior orders of the people. The more they are instructed, the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders. An instructed and intelligent people, besides, are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant and stupid one. They feel themselves, each individually, more respectable and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors, and they are therefore more disposed to respect those superiors. They are more disposed to examine, and more capable of seeing through, the interested complaints of faction and sedition, and they are upon that account less apt to be misled into any wanton or unnecessary opposition to the measures of government. In free countries, where the safety of government depends very much upon the favourable judgement which the people may form of its conduct, it must surely be of the highest importance that they should not be disposed to judge rashly or capriciously concerning it.

The governments of the polished states of antiquity, paid very great attention to the education of the citizens. That was, no doubt, diversified according to the peculiarities of

the times, and the notions entertained of the acquirements requisite to promote the interests of the state, and to defend the country; but every government felt itself interested in prescribing a course of instruction for the children of all free men. They conceived, and justly, that every member of the state is bound, by whatever powers of mind or of body he possesses, to serve his country*; and that these were, therefore, to be improved by a preparatory course of study and discipline. But this principle, if not entirely overlooked in modern times, has seldom been fully acted upon; and the great body of the youth have had their opinions and habits formed, not by the aiding power of regular culture, but by the casual influences and impressions to which their circumstances have exposed them. Though this state of things might be unavoidable during the darkness of the middle ages, it has become, since the revival of letters, and the invention of the art of printing, altogether improper and inexcusable. Knowledge may now be diffused with the greatest facility; the intellectual and moral improvement of the popu-

* *Ad societatem, et communitatem generis humani nati sumus; itaque semper aliquid ad communem utilitatem debemus affere.*

Cicero.

lace may, therefore, at a very inconsiderable expence, be secured.

Though it appears, then, that the first part of the supposition by which these remarks have been introduced,—namely, that by affording universally the means of instruction to the inferior orders of society, many will attempt to better their condition, and aspire to a more elevated rank than that which they enjoy,—is undoubtedly true, and so far from being an evil, is to be considered among the greatest advantages, since it is a powerful motive to active and persevering exertion; yet, the second part of this same hypothesis, viz. that the lower orders of the people will become discontented, and unwilling to perform that drudgery to which their circumstances confine them, is perfectly erroneous.

Those who make this assertion, must have very confused and inaccurate ideas of the constitution of human nature. They have probably taken up a certain number of opinions, on all subjects, which they deliver on all occasions, never doubting their truth, because they have never inquired into the nature of that evidence on which they are founded. A very slight attention, however, to this subject might convince them of the fallacy of the notions which they entertain. For is it not

palpably manifest, that though education will enlighten the mind, and may excite the desire of wealth and honour, it cannot change the passions and appetites implanted in man, and which are necessary to the continued existence of the species? Knowledge will certainly make the poor rational and intelligent, sober and thoughtful, but cannot possibly make them forget to eat and to drink, nor to neglect those avocations by which the means of gratifying the imperious desire of food are obtained. Even though it were possible to make them all philosophers, yet, since philosophy cannot satisfy the returning importunities of hunger and thirst, nor supply the other necessities of nature, the great business of life would continue to go on as at present: there would be still ploughmen, and porters, and coachmen, farther removed, indeed, in point of intellect from the brute creation, but not less civil to their employers, and surely not less industrious and persevering in their employment. How preposterous is it then to suppose, that nature has left her great operations, her directing and impelling powers, to be changed or mutilated by the pleasure or caprice of man? These operations, and these powers, are equally constant amid the varied forms which society assumes,

—whether its state be learned or ignorant, rich or poor, refined or barbarous.

But though education cannot eradicate any passion or appetite in human nature, there is a desire which if it does not wholly create, it most powerfully invigorates; I refer to the desire of improving the condition. Where the people are grossly ignorant, this principle has much less force than in a country where intelligence is equally diffused, and where freedom of thought and of action is allowed: and perhaps, in circumstances of this last description, it might, if not attended with some counteracting forces, occasion some evil. The impelling power of this desire, and the force by which it is regulated and restrained, may not improperly be compared to the centripetal and centrifugal forces in the philosophy of Newton; and the former are not less necessary to the prosperity of the moral world, than the latter are to the existence of the physical. While the desire to improve the condition may be considered as a constantly operating power, acting in a certain direction, the passions and appetites of human nature form another, and an opposing power, by which the impetus of this is regulated and rendered useful. Though this illustration from analogy may be deemed more fanciful than just, it does not affect the

truth of the remark which it is designed to explain.—If, indeed, it were optional with the poor whether they performed the drudgery of their station or not, or, if they attended to their employment, merely because they were ignorant, then it might be inexpedient to afford them that knowledge by which they become indolent: but since every man, whether lettered or unlettered, stands in need of bread, and since, therefore, if poor, he is impelled to labour by a force which is regular in its operation, and which has more efficiency than any that human ingenuity can put in its place, the danger which is apprehended from the most extensive system of national education, is a mere dream of the imagination.

It may seem improper in a Scotchman, always to refer to his own country for proofs of the excellent effects of knowledge among the poor; but if an appeal to observation, where it is practicable, for the truth of any position, be better than a mere acquiescence in speculation, then, in discussing the present subject, it becomes unavoidable. For though the unparalleled generosity and benevolence of Englishmen go a great way to supply the lack of parochial schools, by supporting similar institutions, they have not yet had time to produce all their effects. We must still have recourse

to the north side of the Tweed for living examples, to prove that it is possible for men to be very good porters, and ploughmen,—to occupy the very meanest offices of society, and yet be tolerably acquainted with the arts of reading, writing, and even of performing the rule of three. Here there is no extraordinary discontentedness discovered under the pressures of life, and no difficulty experienced in procuring labourers for the most menial or even offensive services. Nor is the employer less pleased with his workmen or servants, because they have got some share of that intelligence and thoughtfulness which education generally ensures. The truth is, discontent and a disposition to murmur at the lot which Providence has assigned us, is the effect, not of moral and religious instruction, but of ignorance, since knowledge enables us to appreciate the blessings already enjoyed, and refers the mind to that future state of felicity, in which every inequality of this life will be fully adjusted. The poor man who has only scanty fare for himself and his family, but whose heart is impressed with the hopes of christianity, and cheered by its animating consolations, will endure with submission and pious resignation, those toils and cares which the will of Heaven has appointed him. If he attempts

to better his condition, it is by means of industry, honesty, and uprightness; and these are means which seldom fail to render such an attempt ultimately successful.

Having thus considered some of the prejudices which oppose the education of the poor, it may be said, that I have given them more attention than they seem to merit. They are, indeed, like prejudices of every kind, founded in ignorance; but they serve the useful purpose of leading to a closer investigation of those principles, which, in whatever way they are analysed, conduct to the same results.

Besides those already mentioned, there is another way in which a national system of education tends to promote the happiness and improvement of the kingdom; I mean, its tendency to impose those moral restraints which limit the extent of population to the means of subsistence. This appears to me to be a most important subject, and merits a much larger share of attention than it has yet received.

It is very evident that population has a natural tendency to advance, not in proportion to the means of subsistence, but in a much greater ratio: the one proceeds in a geometrical, the other in an arithmetical, proportion. This may

now be considered as an established fact in political science; and this general truth leads to conclusions very important to the happiness of society. For in consequence of the power of multiplying the species, with which nature has invested the human kind, there is a danger in most cases lest the number of the people should go beyond the quantity of food provided for their support. Wherever this occurs, and it occurs in some parts of the world very frequently, it produces various evils: the existing population must be more sparingly fed; the provision which is no more than adequate for five, it is necessary to divide among ten, and that which is no more than sufficient for the comfortable support of two millions of people, must be managed so as to serve three. Nor does the evil stop at such a comparatively moderate excess of inhabitants as is here supposed: it advances until disease, and famine, and war, necessarily diminish the population, and again render it proportionable to the means of subsistence. Unfortunately these ministers of death will have occasion in a short time again to return, and again, in infinite succession, till those remedies which Providence has appointed be applied to prevent the recurrence of an evil, which these are designed to remove.

Of these remedies, the principal is the diffusion of moral and religious knowledge by means of education. Man, rude and ignorant, has little dominion over his passions; he yields to the force of his appetites with scarcely any consideration as to consequences; he unites himself to a female without having made any provision for his offspring, and thus he involves the innocents that are to be born in calamities over which they can have no controul. The contrary of this, however, is the case with a man of strong moral feelings and habits: he has accustomed his passions to bear some restraint; he reflects on the evils of poverty; the consequences of an unprovided and premature marriage; on the positive guilt of involving an amiable female in the distresses of penury and want; and on those complicated circumstances which render him for life incapable of bettering his condition. These are considerations which will naturally occur to an intelligent mind; and they are sufficient to deter a prudent man from an union for which he is altogether unprepared. It is possible, indeed, that the influence of education in counteracting these evils may be greatly obstructed by particular customs, or by an improper interference with the concerns of the poor: but even in such circumstances its in-

fluence will be of considerable avail, since it makes man more rational and thoughtful, and raises him above that low state of degradation to which otherwise his nature will be confined. Hence the necessity of presenting to the human mind some subject on which it may usefully exercise its faculties, something to excite and improve the moral feeling, something that will abstract the attention from the call of passion,—from the debasing pleasures of low and sensual enjoyment: so true is it, though the contrary has been maintained by those whose privilege it is to influence the destiny of nations, that knowledge among the multitude is essentially necessary to make their actions ultimately subservient to the real wealth and happiness of the state.

That passion which in barbarous countries occasions much evil, may, where the blessings of true religion and civilization are enjoyed, produce much good. In such circumstances, the tender influence which virtuous love exerts on the feelings, and dispositions, and character, is truly of the happiest kind; while it removes some of the asperities natural to the male, it awakens and cherishes the most delightful sympathies of his nature. Nor is this confined to the higher ranks of life; it will find its way to every order of society, provided it be ac-

accompanied by moral and religious knowledge. Even the youthful inhabitants of the cottage, which is hallowed by the daily invocation of His presence who dwells with the lowly, are no strangers to the ameliorating power of that pleasing emotion which delights to make its object happy, and which, with its gentle but irresistible sway, excites to the ardent and ceaseless imitation of the thousand nameless excellencies, which its object is supposed to possess. And of these sons of care and toil, perhaps it may be said, that the most delightful period of a life that is full of trouble, is, whilst the tenderest sensibilities of the heart are alive to the impressions of female beauty and loveliness, to the pleasure of all the endearing associations which the indications of tenderness, and benevolence, and virtue, must necessarily form.

It is the more necessary to dwell on this particular, since it has been objected to those views which Mr. Malthus has had the merit of placing in a striking light, that they afford a dark and melancholy representation of the conduct of Providence, by holding out discouragements to the early union of the sexes. Now, if those who have not the means of supporting a family, and these are the only persons to whose early marriage the opinions of Mr. Malthus, or rather the dictates of sound

prudence, and of scripture, afford any discouragement, were deprived of the tender, and pleasing, and humanising influence to which I have alluded, the views in question would, indeed, be dark and melancholy. But they, as well as others, may enjoy the moral advantage which an early and a continued attachment to one object affords, and all those bright visions of the future, which arise to the imagination and the heart of the dullest lover, and which made the service of seven years for Rachel, appear to the enamoured patriarch "but a few days, for the love he had to her."——Indeed this subject, when fully investigated, will not only appear illustrative of the intentions of Deity as to the moral destiny of man, but also of the extreme necessity of giving every possible attention to the instruction of the people.

Besides, the desire to consummate virtuous love will have a tendency to produce such exertion as will make some provision for the future union. All the earnings of the preceding years are carefully preserved: the lover is industrious and economical that he may have some little stock by which he can render the object of his affections more comfortable. This practice, while it induces sober habits, which will continue always useful to the individual

and his family, is of very great utility to the public, since it prevents the children born from such a marriage from becoming an useless burden. In this way, the extent of population will not at any time go much beyond the means of sustenance necessary for its support; and thus the wealth and happiness of the kingdom are promoted. Such a state of things has already taken place in Scotland to a good degree: there the poor, in place of being a nuisance to the public, are industrious, and virtuous, and comfortable: all the effects of such habits are apparent in the unrivalled progress of its agriculture, and in the advancing prosperity of the whole country. —This is the happy result of the education of the poor. If it be necessary to set off the colouring of this beautiful picture by one of an opposite description, let us turn our attention to Ireland, and there it is fully presented to our view. There the poor are ignorant, superstitious, and comfortless; wandering about in crowds on the public roads, loathsome with filth and disease, a burden to themselves, and an annoyance to those who are stunned with the noise of their vociferation. Nor is the condition of the native peasantry greatly better: their poverty and wretchedness are well known; they have been remarked by every traveller.

Some persons have attributed these evils to the oppression of middlemen, others to the galling pressure of the tithes, and some to the debasing influence of penal statutes and political degradation; but while it is admitted that middlemen, and tithes, and penal statutes have produced their full proportion of the general calamity, the principal source of the evil is the gross ignorance and consequent incapacity of the people, and until this in some degree be removed, all the efforts to improve Ireland, though not useless, will prove totally inadequate.

In the third place, the education of the inferior orders of the people becomes peculiarly necessary in all manufacturing countries. This necessity arises from the circumstances in which the inferior orders of the people are placed in all countries of this description. These evidently, if they do not directly produce imbecility of judgement, present few objects by which its powers are exercised, and can scarcely be considered as favourable either to the purity or polish of the manners. The mechanic who has been confined from his earliest years to the same unvaried employment, and who has only to perform the same operation, unacquainted with difficulty, may be subservient to national opulence, but cannot greatly improve his mind. Indeed, the monotonous sameness

of his occupation, as it renders unnecessary all mental exertion; must have a tendency to destroy the force of his intellectual faculties, and induce a powerful inaptitude to every work that is arduous and liberal, to every feeling that is generous, and tender, and manly. If men are treated all their life time as children, or, what amounts nearly to the same thing, if their situation requires little more than the mechanical labour of which children are capable, it is not probable that they will ever be able to form the vigorous conceptions of matured understandings. This, however, is the condition of thousands who spend their life in the shops of the manufacturer. Here there is no object to call forth the energies of their mind, no excitement applied to the inventive powers, no intricacies to be unravelled, no difficulties to be removed; some mechanical dexterity, applied in the same dull direction, is all that is required.

The reverse is the case in the pastoral and agricultural life; where new objects are daily presenting themselves to the view; where, in the latter state of society especially, by every changing combination of circumstances, the mental powers are employed and strengthened, and where it is impossible for the experience of the past to furnish, in many cases, an accurate

directory for the future. "In such societies, the varied occupations of every man oblige every man to exert his capacity, and to invent expedients for removing difficulties which are continually occurring. Invention is kept alive, and the mind is not suffered to fall into that drowsy stupidity, which, in a civilized society, seems to benumb the understanding of almost all the inferior orders of the people. In these barbarous societies, as they are called, every man it has already been observed, is a warrior. Every man too is in some measure a statesman, and can form a tolerable judgment concerning the interest of the society, and the conduct of those who govern it. How far their chiefs are good judges in peace, or good leaders in war, is obvious to the observation of almost every single man among them. In such a society, indeed, no man can well acquire that improved and refined understanding, which a few men sometimes possess in a more civilized state. Though in a rude society there is a good deal of variety in the occupations of every individual, there is not a great deal in those of the whole society. Every man does, or is capable of doing, almost every thing which any other man does, or is capable of doing. Every man has a considerable degree of knowledge, ingenuity

and invention ; but scarcely any man has a great degree. The degree, however, which is commonly possessed, is generally sufficient for conducting the whole simple business of the society. In a civilized state, on the contrary, though there is little variety in the occupation of the greater part of individuals, there is an almost infinite variety in those of the whole society. These varied occupations present an almost infinite variety of objects to the contemplation of those few, who, being attached to no particular occupation themselves, have leisure and inclination to examine the occupations of other people. The contemplation of so great a variety of objects necessarily exercises their minds in endless comparisons and combinations, and renders their understandings, in an extraordinary degree, both acute and comprehensive.—Notwithstanding the great abilities of those few, all the nobler parts of the human character may be, in a great measure, obliterated and extinguished in the great body of the people.”*

Hence it is that in all rude society, the difference between the chieftain and his vassal, in point of intellectual attainment and accomplishment, is really very little. The one is exercised

* Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, v. iii.

in the same school of discipline, enured to the same hardships, accustomed to the same patience and vigilant exertion, the same foresight, fortitude, and contempt of death, as the other. In this case, there is no danger of falling into that state of torpid insensibility, or of mental vacuity, which a consciousness of total incapacity and perpetual neglect have a tendency to produce. The vassal feels his own importance, not merely as connected with a powerful chieftain, but as an useful if not a necessary instrument in carrying his enterprising designs into execution. His manners and address are thus greatly improved; and those manly feelings, which in every state of society are essential to true politeness, and from which, what is called good breeding in modern times chiefly takes its rise, acquire a predominant and permanent influence. Both the intellectual and moral powers are thus strengthened, and the character though far from being perfect, approaches nearer to perfection than that of persons of the same rank, placed in different circumstances. For in proportion as society advances in civilization, and the division of labour is multiplied, in the same proportion will be the retrograde motion of the inferior orders of the people as to all mental endowment—as to all the tender feelings of refined delicacy to the other sex, and as to every plea-

sing and winning accomplishment. And what may seem extraordinary, that very progress of society which is so desirable, and that indefinite division of labour, without which manufactures cannot flourish, form the causes by which these effects are produced.

In an advanced state of civilization it is perfectly manifest, that the friendly and familiar intercourse between the higher and the lower ranks, common to other times, is at an end. Those manners, therefore, which in such times were not altogether peculiar to any class of the community, are now, for the most part, confined to those circles from which all mechanics are of course excluded. In place of that respectful confidence which the vassal felt, when he addressed his chieftain as his friend and his lord, and in place of that condescension and warmth of affection which the chieftain on his side discovered, there is now, on the one hand, expressed a haughty indifference to the concerns of inferiors, and on the other, a servile abjectness little calculated to beget liberal or manly sentiments.—But the tendency of an indefinite division of labour is not less hostile to intellectual exertion, than that change of circumstances to which I refer is to the polish of the manners; since it confines the noble powers with which man is invested, to the mere mechanical production

of an unvaried effect. If the powers of the mind, like those of the body, are improved only by exercise, then it follows that where this exercise is not necessary, or rather is completely precluded, mental debility must have the ascendancy.

If these remarks be well founded, and they seem almost self-evident, the consequences which result from the progress of manufactures and the indefinite division of labour, afford rather a melancholy prospect, as it regards the advancing perfection of the human character, and the interests of civil liberty. These interests depend, not so much on the comparatively few literary men which a state of growing opulence and civilization will produce, as on the intellectual endowments, and on the moral feelings and perceptions of the great body of the people. Where the middling and inferior ranks of society are weak, and ignorant, and consequently superstitious, they are altogether incapable of appreciating the invaluable blessings of a free government, and are still less willing to hazard their lives to defend them : though such a government may be established among a people in these circumstances it cannot long continue ; and while their faculties remain depressed and inert, though revolutions in the state should take place in infinite succession, their

condition cannot be changed greatly for the better. If British liberties, therefore, are to be maintained, those qualities in the people by which they were originally secured must also be maintained, and the circumstances by which these qualities may be affected should be carefully observed, and their injurious influence counteracted. A beneficent providence in this case, as in every other which relates to the happiness of man, has not left us without resources; since it has put into our hands the means by which the intellectual and moral character of the people, may, notwithstanding the obstacles by which it is opposed, be maintained and greatly improved. Education is this powerful means: and to be satisfied that it is capable of attaining this end, let us only recollect that the division of labour enervates the mind of the mechanic by depriving him of all occasion for mental exertion. The communication of knowledge goes a considerable way to supply this deficiency: it presents to the mind new ideas, by the comparing of which, the judgement must necessarily be strengthened: it unfolds prospects which cannot fail to stimulate his imagination, and to enlarge the sphere of his intellectual energies.

It is true, the poor have little time which they can devote to the acquisition of knowledge: when children, they have been em-

ployed in earning their bread; and now that they are men, they must, by incessant application, provide for themselves and their family. But this circumstance only proves the infinite importance of education to the poor; since that period of their youth, in which they are unfit for business, is the only time which their poverty will suffer them to spare from necessary labour, and which, therefore, ought to be assiduously employed in laying some foundation for their future moral and intellectual character. The branches of education which it is possible to acquire in such a short time must necessarily be very limited; but they will be found extremely useful: a knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic, may be tolerably well attained, which, if it fails to do all the good that might be wished for, will at least prevent, in some degree, the recurrence of evils which ignorance and imbecility most certainly ensure. A knowledge of reading itself enables the mechanic to obtain useful information, and is likely to induce him rather to spend his leisure hours in the improvement of his mind, than amid the riot and intemperance of the ale-house.

By noticing those branches of education which it is in the power of the poor in every situation to acquire, I am far from approving of the officiousness of those whose benevolent anxiety

for the concerns of the inferior orders, obliges them to appoint prescribed limits to their instruction. This conduct seems to me as absurd, and as contrary to sound policy, as that of determining the kind and quantity of food which the poor are to eat, and the quality of the cloth with which they are to be clothed. Superiors are sometimes accustomed to think, that they can manage the interests of their inferiors much better than they can themselves. No supposition can be more unreasonable or more contrary to fact: since experience shews that the poor are more economical themselves than any rich man can be for them, and are capable of directing their immediate interests much better than it is possible for those who are placed in very different circumstances to do on their behalf. The poor have the power of reason as well as the rich: and is it not probable that they will act more conformably to common sense and right reason, when they are permitted to think for themselves, and feel that they are solely accountable for the merit or demerit of their actions, than when they are taught to believe that others must think for them?—It is truly provoking to hear those, who in general terms assent to the education of the lower orders of the people, strenuously maintain that there is a danger lest they should become learned over much; to prevent

which they assume the power of prescribing the just boundaries of their literary attainments. Unfortunately the circumstances in which the poor are placed are of themselves sufficient to limit the extent of these attainments: they *must* labour for bread; there is no avoiding the imperious call of nature; they want time, and often inclination to become moderately learned. Some, indeed, will rise above these difficulties, and under discouragements which nothing less than the impetus of genius could successfully encounter, will tread in the path of science to honour and to fame. And who can wish that these lights from heaven, which occasionally emerge from the obscurity and darkness in which they were originally involved, and “which communicate to objects a morning freshness and unaccountable lustre, that is not seen in the creation of nature,” should have the effulgent brightness of their beams extinguished, and its benefit for ever lost to the world, by the useless restrictions which ignorance and misconception impose on a system of popular education? As under a free government, the path of honour is open to all, so every one should have free access to that of literature and science. Let then the elementary branches of education be fairly placed within the reach of the very poorest of the people, and they themselves will be best capable

of judging how far they can afford a more liberal course of education. It is the duty of the state to impart to the lowest subject the means of acquiring knowledge; it is his right to improve them. And that folly must indeed be presumptuous, which affects to say even of his progress in the attainment of knowledge, *hitherto shalt thou go and no farther*.

In addition to these arguments which have been advanced to prove the utility and necessity of the universal education of the poor, there is yet another, the force of which should certainly be acknowledged in such a country as this: I refer to the obligations of this nature arising from the Christian Religion; the genius of which is as liberal as the most liberal but sound philosophy can desire.

Christianity in its precepts, its spirit, and design, is completely hostile to ignorance in any order of the people. When its divine Author commanded his Apostles to teach all nations, he surely meant all the individuals of which nations are composed. And he himself condescended to shew them an example, by preaching the gospel to the poor,—by teaching those who were as sheep without a shepherd, who were ignorant and out of the way. Indeed, indifference to the interests of the inferior orders of the people is totally incompatible

with that spirit of humility and benevolence which his doctrines uniformly inculcate. These doctrines pre-suppose, what some persons are not very willing to allow, that there is no man, whatever be his rank or situation, who is not capable in some degree of understanding them, and to whom it may not be an irreparable loss not to know them. If there be any truth in that solemn declaration of the Saviour, that this is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, he is not without guilt, who leaves those in ignorance, to whom it is in his power to impart the benefits of knowledge. But certainly there is no way of communicating knowledge so effectual as by an early education; it is in youth that the mind is most easily susceptible of impression, and that principles of piety and religion may be implanted. The work of the preacher is greatly facilitated, when those among whom he labours have been familiar from their infancy with the truths of revelation.

The chief design of christianity, it is true, is to fit men for another life, to raise their hopes and affections to a state of endless purity and joy : but it accomplishes this end by turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. While heaven and immortality are its objects, it leaves behind in its progress

thither the manifest impressions of its divinity. It proves a present blessing of incalculable value in every nation into which it is introduced; since freedom of enquiry, and science, and humanity are its effects; since it produces those mild and silent virtues which meliorate the condition of the poor, and augment the happiness of the rich; and since ignorance and superstition must necessarily retire before its healthful and illuminating rays. False religion addresses itself to the passions and weaknesses of man; the true enlightens his understanding in order to affect and purify his heart. It is christianity alone that restores the poor and the forgotten of our species to their intellectual and moral rights; that enables them to feel and to act in a manner becoming the dignity and destiny of man; that enforces with the awful sanction of divine authority, their claim to mental cultivation; that maintains the worth and immortality of their nature not less than that of the rich and noble; and that amid all the cares, and toils, and sorrows, to which poverty exposes them, affords them those views, and hopes, and consolations, which make them intelligent, and cheerful, and happy. Is there, then, a man who professes to be a Christian, and yet refuses to enlighten the poor, to aid in educating the sons of misery and want, to disseminate the

knowledge of salvation in every direction? If there is, that man acts in opposition to the first precepts of revelation, to the spirit and design of the gospel, to the profession of religion which he makes. It is in vain that such a man replies, that the inferior orders may be religious without being enlightened, and true Christians without learning to read: for no man can be possessed of the religion of Christ without some degree of knowledge; and since that knowledge is obtained purest from the bible, the power of reading that sacred book is highly necessary.—But on this subject it is needless to argue, since the progress of vital christianity, to every one who knows what that means, affords a certain pledge of the education of the poor, and the general increase of knowledge.

Let the philosopher, who with the warm feelings of benevolence contemplates the increased happiness of man in distant ages, take into his calculations, the influence and power of christianity in ameliorating his condition. There are moments, indeed, when a retrospective view of the course of human affairs can afford him little confidence or hope for the time to come; when melancholy reflections on the folly, and corruption, and mutation of man, induce him to consider the lovely pictures of ideal

happiness, the lively prospects of the future fortunes and destiny of the world, as the pleasing but visionary dream of the imagination ; and when the great beauty of virtue seems to be lost amid the endless imperfections with which it is surrounded. What can be more fitted to remove the anxieties which this state of mind occasions, than the friendly intimations of that pure religion which breathes peace and benevolence to man ; intimations which confirm the doubtful deductions of reason as to the progressive advancement of our race to a higher state of political and moral happiness and improvement ! The loveliness of that happy and tranquil scene which its beautiful and impassioned language describes, exceeds even the sanguine hopes of the philanthropic heart : and though this may receive some of its colouring from the figurative style of prophecy, the emotions which it awakens are by far too delightful to permit us calmly to question any part of its approaching reality. “ The wilderness and solitary place shall be glad ; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing.—For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

It must be allowed that the effects of true religion on the affairs of the world have hitherto

been very limited; its ameliorating influence has been greatly counteracted by a variety of concurring circumstances. Superstition and priestcraft, when they could not oppose its triumphant progress, enlisted under its banner, and assuming its hallowed name, erected a power which, during a long night of darkness, benumbed the energies of man. It is only yesterday that this power was destroyed; and the consequences which have resulted from it are felt, and will be felt, in Europe for ages to come. But why may not, in the revolutions of the world, a similar power be again established on the dearest liberties of man? If superstition and priestcraft have existed in every period, and have contributed to embitter the happiness of human life, why may they not continue to exist, and be, as they have always been, the faithful allies of tyranny and every species of arbitrary government? What reason have we to expect that religion will do more for the future than it has done in the past; or, that its influence on the general interests of man will be more powerful and benign than it has ever been; or, that the various and changing circumstances which for eighteen centuries have obstructed its progress and perverted its design, may not again and again, in perpetual succession, occur to obstruct and

pervert them, and the world thus continue to be afflicted with the same calamities, and exhibit the same appearances of imbecility, and corruption, and ignorance, and superstition, that it has always presented? Melancholy, indeed, must be the feelings of the friend of man, could he bring himself to believe that all this were possible; and that all the improvements which philosophy, and patriotism, and religion, may effect, are liable to be buried in the barbarism of future times. There are various circumstances however which encourage us to think that there is no just ground for entertaining any such apprehensions; that, on the contrary, religion will go on to bless and civilize the nations to an extent hitherto unknown.

1. The extensive and almost universal circulation of the sacred writings is a circumstance of itself which marks an æra of singular importance in the history of the world. The commencement of this æra may be dated from the reformation; and the principles which led to it have been acquiring, in this country, ever since, additional strength and importance. While they are understood and acted upon, it seems impossible for superstition again to become powerful, or greatly to restrict the progress of free inquiry, or to retard the advancement of the moral improvement and happiness of man.

The circulation of the scriptures allows every one to exercise his own judgement, and that, too, on a subject which is of no less importance than the concerns of another world: the habit thus acquired of thinking for one's self cannot fail to be useful in all the departments of life.

2. The facilities which are afforded for educating the inferior orders of the people, is another circumstance which tends to give religion an extensive and permanent influence. The advantages arising from the instruction of the populace, are now become palpably manifest. Without this instruction, the circulation of the Scriptures, and the invention of the art of printing, can be of no lasting avail in preventing the return of the ignorance and barbarism of former times; since a bible can be of little use to him who cannot read, and the printing art is of still less utility where there is not the intelligence and energy in the people necessary to their contending for the liberty of the press.—But without being visionary, it is surely not too much to say, that education and religion combined are not only the best, but seem to be the only adequate means for rendering permanent the blessings of a free government, and the comforts and endearments of civilized life.

3. Universal toleration is another circumstance which has a favourable aspect on the progress of human affairs. This principle is now generally recognised; and happily it is not less politically expedient, than it is subservient to the interests of true religion. It may, indeed, give rise to some theological disputation, as freedom of opinion does to disputation of every kind; but while it leaves the energy of truth silently to produce its peaceful effects, it renders the narrowness and power of bigotry perfectly harmless. Besides, it appears to me, that in consequence of toleration, the nature and design of christianity are much better understood than they have been for many centuries. The religion of Christ is now allowed by all parties to consist, not in ecclesiastical forms, but in a living principle of action, “an inwrought habit, a pervading and informing spirit, from which indeed every act derives all its life, and energy, and beauty.” The general prevalence of this sentiment gives the truths of revelation a greater efficacy, diminishes the force of prepossession, softens the intercourse of society, and confers on the political union greater strength and harmony.

These are some of the circumstances, which in addition to the explicit intimations of re-

velation respecting the progressive improvement and illumination of the human race, are sufficient to encourage the hopes and exertions of all good men.

SECTION II.

On the Education of the lower Orders of the Irish.

“ I THINK I may say, that of all the men we
“ meet with, nine parts of ten are what they
“ are, good or evil, useful or not, by their edu-
“ cation. 'Tis that which makes the great
“ difference in mankind. The little or almost
“ insensible impressions on our tender infan-
“ cies, have very important and lasting conse-
“ quences: and there it is, as in the foun-
“ tains of some rivers, where a gentle applica-
“ tion of the hand turns the flexible waters into
“ channels, that make them take quite con-
“ trary courses; and by this little direction
“ given them at first in the source, they re-
“ ceive different tendencies, and arrive at last
“ at very remote and distant places*.” This
is the means, as we have seen, by which the
actions of the multitude may be rendered, in
the highest degree, subservient to the security
and happiness of the state.

* Locke's Thoughts concerning Education.

Before I consider the nature of those schools which should be introduced into Ireland, and the practicability of introducing them, it is proper to take some notice of such as have been already established. As early as the reign of James the Sixth, free schools were erected in several of the large towns: they have since been extended to some parts of the country. It appears from a late report of the Commissioners of the Board of Education in Ireland, that their number is greater than might have been supposed. Of 1122 benefices, returns have been made to the commissioners from 736 of these: by which it is shewn, that in this number of benefices there are 549 schools, at which 23,000 children receive instruction. The course of instruction comprises reading, writing, and arithmetic. The schools are open to children of all religious persuasions; who, for the most part, pay for their education at rates, which vary from two shillings and six-pence, to five shillings and four-pence, and even as high as eleven shillings a quarter. It appears from the report, that there is a great want of proper school-masters and school-houses; and that religious prejudices, more particularly in the south and west, have operated against the attendance on the schools. In the parish of Ballesidare,

diocese of Killala, there seems to be a general determination on the part of the Roman catholics not to send their children to protestant schools, and *vice versa*. But “ from the general returns from all the dioceses, it is evident that a large proportion of the children attending the *parish schools* throughout Ireland are of the Roman catholic religion.” The commissioners acknowledge that though a school similar to those which already exist, were established in every parish in Ireland, it would be perfectly inadequate to the instruction of the Irish poor. “ And this inadequacy is the reason (they say) of our not entering more fully into the consideration of any plan for putting them into a more effective situation, as such a plan might possibly interfere with, or be superseded by, a general system for the education of the poor, the consideration of which is reserved for the conclusion of our labours. *We shall nevertheless at present observe, that not any funds, however great, or the best considered establishment, can substantially carry into effect either any improvement in the parish schools, or any general system of instruction of the lower orders of the community, until the want of persons duly qualified to undertake the edu-*

*“ cation of the lower classes be remedied, and
“ till some institution be formed to prepare
“ persons for that important office.”*

On the substance of this report, I shall make a few remarks. It should be recollected then, that in Ireland there are no legal establishments similar to the parochial schools of Scotland: what the commissioners call parish schools, are those in which the teacher receives the principal part of his salary either from the recent or remote endowments of government. These charitable foundations were, in former times, very greatly misapplied, not by those who appointed them, but by such as received their benefit.—Though the character and conduct of the school-masters of the present day, be considerably improved, yet it is right that those gentlemen who superintend the free schools of Ireland should be on their guard against imposition.

Those schools that are called protestant charter schools in Ireland, are far from being adapted for popular instruction. Great sums are annually expended for their support, whilst their utility is extremely limited. This arises, partly from the narrow principle of confining them to protestants, or to the children of such Roman catholics as allow their offspring to be

educated in the reformed religion ; and partly from the circumstance of their being boarding schools. A general system of education, to make it useful, must be conducted on the most popular plan. National education should be directed to general utility ; general utility cannot be pursued, while we confine our views to one particular sect or class. Education, to be generally useful, must be something, in which all without reluctance may co-operate. Intolerance must not counterfeit the amiable countenance, and clothe herself in the venerable garb of charity, that she may grasp with profane hand, the funds that should be consecrated to the most holy purposes,—to the diffusion of practical morality—of general industry—of national prosperity.

In these protestant charter schools, “ the children are too much at the mercy of the masters and mistresses ; and too little judgment is shewn in the selection of the persons who are invested with the important trust of educating these children. The consequences are such as might naturally be expected ; frequently gross inattention, or worse, with respect to the cleanliness, the diet, and apparel of the children, as well as to their morals, and progress in industry. Hence, it too frequently

comes to pass, that when the charter school children are taken as apprentices, to be trained up as domestic servants, or instructed in manufactures, they most commonly prove slothful, dirty, and vicious*.”

In the report of the commissioners there is not one word about teaching the children in the Irish language: from their silence we may infer that there is no such thing taught; though of this I was previously aware from personal observation. Now, it is most certain that in the diocese of Killala, to which the report refers, the lower orders of the Roman catholics, or the greater part, understand no *continued* discourse but in Irish: this is the only language in which they think, in which they converse among themselves, and to which they are accustomed in their chapels. To go to such a diocese, therefore, to erect English schools for *their* instruction, does not appear perfectly absurd, only because the public mind has not been sufficiently informed to consider it in this light. I have already had occasion to observe that the Roman catholics in such districts are, in general, prejudiced

* Preston's Essay on the Natural Advantages of Ireland, p. 148.

against the English language: their hostility to protestantism they transfer to the only tongue which they have ever heard protestants use; and they are confirmed in this hostility by the insinuations of their priests, who uniformly address them in the endearing and endeared speech of their fathers. We might expect, therefore, *a priori*, that they would discover some prejudice against a mere English school; that all their prepossessions as to catholicism, and all their fears as to heresy, would be awakened. This accordingly has been the case; the experiment has been tried; and the result confirms the truth of this opinion. “It certainly, however, appears,” say the commissioners, “from our returns, that religious prejudices, “in too many parts of this country, but more “particularly *in the south and west*, have operated against the attendance on the parish “schools.” Now, the south and west of Ireland are those very parts in which the Irish is chiefly spoken, and where there are comparatively few protestants.

I might perhaps be confounded, and even hesitate as to the truth of the opinion which I hold on this subject, from the confident assertions of some Anglo-Hibernians, were it not that I have actually been in the west of Ireland,

and have it in my power, from repeated and continued observation, to form my judgement. Wherever it was announced that the scriptures would be read in the Irish language, crowds of catholics came to hear, who never till then heard a protestant read the bible; and I shall ever recollect the manifest pleasure with which they seemed to receive instruction, the seriousness and devotion with which they listened. Those gentlemen who were accustomed to oppose every effort to enlighten the people otherwise than in the English tongue, who witnessed this singular scene, were not only satisfied from that period of the fallacy of their notions, but of the indispensable obligation and necessity of pursuing that mode of instruction for which I always have contended. One of these gentlemen was once strongly opposed to this mode, from the idea that it would take much time and labour to teach them Irish; and that though the people could not understand English, yet it was useless to publish the Scriptures in Irish, since there were few who could read it. From the time to which I refer, however, he was of a very different opinion. “It is true,” says he, “very few of the people can read; and is it not equally easy to teach them to read English

“ as any other tongue? To this it may be
“ answered ; First, though they should be taught
“ to read English, they cannot understand it so
“ as to reap any benefit from it. Secondly,
“ they have not the same desire to learn English,
“ especially from a protestant school-master, as
“ Irish. In the one case, there is no feeling
“ of patriotism awakened, no favourite pre-
“ judice flattered ; in the other, both these ends
“ are attained ; and that of which an Hibernian
“ is most disposed to be proud, is rendered sub-
“ servient to his intellectual and moral im-
“ provement. Thirdly, from the extreme
“ attachment of the people to their own tongue,
“ there is not the same probability of success-
“ fully accomplishing the ends of education
“ by teaching them to read in another.”

These are some of the reasons which indu-
ced Mr. —, in the diocese of Killala, to
change his opinions on this important subject;
and I think they will appear conclusive to any
one who candidly considers them. The truth
of the first seems self evident. For example,
how could the populace of England derive any
benefit from teaching them to read French,—
to read the bible in this language? The task
would be so arduous as to make its accomplish-
ment hopeless, and if not hopeless, it would be

nearly useless. The case is very nearly the same with regard to that part of the population in Ireland to which I refer, with this difference, it may be, that the English populace would be probably furnished with dictionaries, were they obliged to read the bible only in the French language; whereas, the poor Irish, in learning to read English, learn merely to read it, without understanding it, and many of the highlanders are to this day placed in the same absurd circumstances. Will it furnish the mind of a poor child with any knowledge as to his duty, with any principle of piety and devotion, with any beautiful example of filial affection, to impress his memory and to warm his heart, to read a chapter the meaning of which he does not understand? It may seem preposterous to dwell so long on what appears so very plain; and so it certainly would be, if only a few obscure individuals had erroneous notions on the subject. But when schools are established, even under the patronage of the Board of Education, on the principle that such notions, erroneous as they are, and as they must doubtless appear to every one who fully and impartially considers them, are just, it becomes a duty to write obvious remarks even at the risk of writing truisms. The subject is infinitely

important as it regards the immediate and effectual instruction of the lower orders of the Irish; it has been misunderstood too long; and to persist in this misunderstanding is not less criminal than it is foolish, since it involves the most serious consequences to a great part of the population of Ireland. Ought that population to be instructed or not? if they ought, is it not singularly perverse to disregard the only possible way in which this can be effectually accomplished? This mode of communicating knowledge may perhaps be neglected; in that case the people will remain ignorant and superstitious; they will be the source of poverty and wretchedness to themselves; they will continue turbulent and barbarous, and that empire which might have made them its glory and defence, will have them for a thorn in its side.—And is this a time coldly to speculate on the advantages of abolishing for ever the Irish language,—of refusing to instruct a people who want to be instructed, unless they understand a dialect which they cannot and will not understand? When the whole of Europe is prostrate at the foot of the tyrant, when it has become the duty and the destiny of Britain to contend for the liberties of the world, to contend for its own independence and existence, how

great is the infatuation, not to embrace every measure of uniting the people, of removing every cause of suspicion in the government, every cause of even seeming grievance in the subject, of enlightening, improving, and civilizing every part of the population!

The commissioners conclude their report by observing, that no fund however great, and no system of education however excellent, can be adequate to the instruction of the Irish poor till an institution be formed to qualify teachers for their important office.—In Ireland it has always been difficult, in many instances impossible, to procure proper school-masters; and this difficulty arises from the general ignorance and depression of the people. But how is this evil to be obviated? Is it by establishing a seminary in which young men may be qualified to become teachers, or, by offering such a reward as to make the supply necessarily answer the demand? In the former mode of obtaining a supply of suitable teachers, there are two circumstances which deserve some consideration. In the first place, there is necessarily a great expence incurred. Suppose there are in a seminary two hundred young men, and no such seminary can fully answer the purpose of its institution if it have less, the board and education of each of these must amount at least to

thirty guineas annually, which altogether comes to six thousand guineas. This is too large an expenditure for the support of any institution, the necessity of whose erection is not absolutely imperious, and perfectly apparent. In the second place, is it not probable that many of those that may be educated at a seminary will not be disposed to continue school-masters? When they have got some education, may they not imagine that they can improve their condition much better in another way than that of a parochial teacher of youth? In this case, though their education is of great advantage to themselves, it is a loss to the institution in which it was obtained.

On the other hand, is it not possible, without any preparatory seminary, to make the supply of school-masters answer the demand? I am of opinion that this is very possible. In Scotland there is no difficulty felt in procuring school-masters for the establishment of the Society for promoting christian knowledge, which only gives £ 15 per annum. Now I am very certain, that every parish in Ireland may be supplied at any time from this country by offering a salary less than the double of that sum, in addition to a trifling fee from the scholars. In the highlands of Scotland there are many young men, who are not only qualified to

teach reading, writing and arithmetic, but also to teach the Irish natives to read in their own language, and who would consider themselves well provided for by an appointment to a salary of £25, with a house. Nor are their moral endowments less suitable than their literary; they are sober, and steady, virtuous, and persevering, and are therefore most capable of encountering the difficulties to which, as Irish school-masters, they may be exposed.—Here, then, is not only an immediate supply of teachers, but that kind of supply which the circumstances of Ireland most want; men who, in consequence of their acquaintance with the Gaelic language, can, in three months after their landing in that country, understand the Irish as well as any native, and in favour of whom the Irish people are already greatly prepossessed. The expence of a preparatory seminary is thus saved, and will go a considerable way towards the support of an extensive system of education.

These remarks receive confirmation from the plan which has been pursued by the Hibernian Society. They support between thirty and forty schools: some of their teachers are from the Highlands; others are native Irish. They have published an Irish spelling book, which, together with the bible in the same language, are the only books for reading

used in their schools: and they employ Roman Catholic teachers on the condition that no other books are introduced into the schools. With such liberal views, with such a sound and rational system of education, so efficient and conciliating, it is impossible for them, even on their limited scale, not to be successful, and eminently useful.

But what is the nature of that general system of education which shall prove adequate to the instruction of the Irish poor? This is a question of the greatest importance, and merits a most serious attention. In a country, where the people are ignorant and superstitious beyond the conceptions or belief of the inhabitants of Britain, and where bigotry and prejudice exist in the same proportion, that system of education must indeed be happily constituted, which will have the effect of awakening from the stupor of barbarism and error, which will neither be regardless of the prejudices, nor inadequate to the wants of the populace. Such a system should be universal in its extent,—formed on liberal principles,—and minutely accommodated to the varying circumstances of the people.

It should be universal in its extent. It therefore evidently must come from government alone: private societies may do some good, but

infinitely less than what is required. At any rate the education of the inferior orders seems a matter far too important to be left to the casual and uncertain efforts of benevolent associations. Indeed, there seems no way in which education can become universal but by a legal establishment of Parochial Schools. In every parish, therefore, in Ireland, there should be at least one school; not supported by uncertain charities, but by the proprietors, under the express authority of law: or, if one school be found inadequate, as I believe in most instances it will, let there be two. These, if conducted on the plan recommended by Bell or Lancaster, will be found sufficient in all the country parishes to afford instruction to the youth which they contain; at all events they will go a great way towards supplying the deficiency.—As to the salary of the school-master, it should be respectable and yet moderate: if it be high, it will render him independent of his own exertions, and indifferent as to the number or the improvement of his pupils; if it be too low, it will render him inconveniently dependent on his scholars, and consequently less respectable. I should imagine that £ 25 on an average would be reckoned throughout Ireland a good salary; with the addition no doubt of a house, and school-wages at an inferior rate.

It has been thought by some, that the most efficient way in which government can promote the education of the various orders of the people, is by making the accomplishments of reading, writing, and arithmetic, essentially necessary to every subject at a certain age, or when entering on the different pursuits and professions into which human life is divided. “ The public can impose upon almost the whole body of the people the necessity of acquiring those most essential parts of education, by obliging every man to undergo an examination or probation in them before he can obtain the freedom in any corporation, or be allowed to set up any trade either in a village or town corporate.

“ It was in this manner, by facilitating the acquisition of their military and gymnastic exercises, by encouraging it, and even by imposing on the whole body of the people the necessity of learning those exercises, that the Greek and Roman republics maintained the martial spirit of their respective citizens. They facilitated the acquisition of those exercises by appointing a certain place for learning and practising them, and by granting to certain masters the privilege of teaching in that place. Those masters do not appear to

“ have had either salaries or exclusive privi-
“ leges of any kind. Their reward consisted al-
“ together in what they got from their scholars;
“ and a citizen who had learned his exercises
“ in the public gymnasia, had no sort of legal
“ advantage over one who had learned them pri-
“ vately, provided the latter had learned them
“ equally well. Those republics encouraged
“ the acquisition of those exercises, by bestow-
“ ing little premiums, and badges of distinc-
“ tion upon those who excelled in them*.”

This stimulus in the present state of society, would, of itself, prove inadequate to the promotion of general education; though united with parochial schools its utility must be immense. The public may distribute among the youth attending these seminaries prizes and badges of honour, which, though trifling in themselves, will excite emulation, and will greatly further the ends of instruction. By this means the people are not only put in possession of the means of education, but reminded that the accomplishments which they acquire at school, are necessary to the improvement of their condition, to their advancement in the path of distinction and honour.

But in order to render a national system

* Smith's Inquiry, &c. v. iii. p. 188.

of education truly useful in Ireland, it must be formed on the most liberal principles; there must be nothing connected with it unnecessarily offensive to the prejudices of the natives. Any inattention to this circumstance will render useless the best scheme of national education. It becomes the more needful to advert to it, since it appears that there is a party in the country whose proscribing notions will not permit them to encourage any national plan of education, unless the catechism and liturgy of a particular church be employed; a party that would rather witness the fair fields of Ireland lying waste and desert, than that any means of culture should be applied different from those which the episcopal body has appointed. When a poor nonconformist or methodist happens, from pure benevolence, to collect a few straggling and ragged children, and teaches them to read the bible, and attempts to impress its beautiful morality on their yielding hearts, these gentlemen exclaim against it as a deadly sin, as a most base, insidious, and heretical act, because the catechism and liturgy of the English church have not been consulted. If those poor children, to whose instruction the parish clergyman pays no regard, are so fortunate as to be taught by a quaker or methodist, this said clergy-

man must have it that the *church is in danger* from the zeal and enthusiasm of dissenters. This conduct is certainly too contemptible to be taken notice of, were it not for the influence it may have on the destiny of Ireland.

Here it is manifest, that no liturgy or church catechism belonging to any Protestant church can be employed in any system of national education which may be introduced; since in that case the catholics will consider themselves excluded. The bible, however, may be introduced without offending their prejudices. It is read in all the schools that are under the patronage of the Hibernian Society, where children of every religious denomination attend;—And surely this, as a religious book, is sufficient, without any commentary, to improve and enlighten;—to promote all the ends of christian morality. Indeed, it seems not a little singular, that professing christians should oppose a plan of instruction in which the daily reading of the sacred writings is included, and where the benefit of millions is concerned, because their favourite catechetical exposition, is, for reasons of expediency, omitted. In the case of Ireland, we have to consider, not what is the best possible system of education, and what those religious books are

which in such a system should be included; but the nature of that plan which is adapted to existing circumstances, which is universally practicable and efficient.

In the last place, a national system of education in Ireland, in order to be useful, should be minutely accommodated to the varying circumstances of the people. It is of so great importance to attend to this peculiarity, that the very best scheme of instruction will be frustrated by its neglect.—If, for example, the school-masters in those districts where the Irish is spoken, are acquainted only with the English language, and are unable to teach the people in their own tongue, it is perfectly evident that little good can be expected. Though half a dozen of such school-masters should be appointed to each parish, their exertions will be of little avail to remove ignorance and superstition; to conciliate the favour and secure the good will of the natives, while they are ignorant of the only tongue through which these natives can receive information. The first qualification requisite for the majority of Irish teachers, though there should be one in every parish, is a knowledge of the Irish language. Without it, their best efforts will be almost useless; with it, the happiest effects will result in a very few years: and that po-

pulation which is now sunk in poverty and wretchedness, and which some consider as dangerous to the security of the British empire, will gradually rise to comfort and opulence, and by their firm and steady attachment to the liberties of their country, will remove the suspicions and jealousies which their more fortunate brethren entertain respecting them.

After all, is the introduction of the plan of education, which I have now adverted to rather than described, practicable? In ascertaining the truth on this particular, it is necessary to attend to the extent of funds requisite, to the facility or difficulty of procuring qualified teachers, and to the disposition which the Irish discover to receive instruction.—As to the fund necessary to support a national system of education, it must no doubt be very considerable; but when viewed in relation to the magnitude and utility of the object which it is to promote, and to the wealth of that country and government from whose revenue it must proceed, it will appear trifling. That sum of money must indeed be immense, which is too great to be expended in removing ignorance, in diminishing vice, in increasing the intellectual strength and resources of the empire, in rendering less necessary the presence of military power, and in augmenting the happiness

of the very useful though inferior orders of society. The money expended in this way, though its returns are not direct, is far from being fruitless: it may with propriety be compared to the exercise of the husbandman in sowing the seed, which, to a perfect stranger to agriculture, may appear folly, since the scattered corn may seem for ever lost; as the abundant crop, however, rewards the patience of the husbandman, he receives the grain which he has committed to the earth many fold: so, that national system of education which requires much labour and a large expenditure of wealth, and whose cost seems immensely disproportionate to the effects which it produces, will imperceptibly tend to enrich the empire by an increase of industry, of enterprising genius, and will ultimately more than compensate for all the money which its institution and support have required. It is, then, so far from being a pecuniary loss, a considerable gain to the state with which it is connected; it directly saves money to the government by rendering the presence of an extensive military establishment unnecessary; and it puts the whole community in possession of those qualities and powers by which its opulence and prosperity are indefinitely augmented.

Besides, the fund requisite to support a na-

tional system of education in Ireland is not so great as it might seem. The salary of a school-master in that country, may, owing to the cheapness of provisions, be very moderate; while the trifling fee which in most cases it will be expedient to receive from the scholars, will form an important addition to the teacher's income.

I have already expressed my opinion as to the possibility of procuring an adequate supply of school-masters. There are many in the Highlands of Scotland, who for a small salary, and on account of the respectability which they associate with the character of a teacher, would willingly go to Ireland. The number of candidates will increase with the demand: if this be great, there will be no scarcity in the market. And for my own part, I can perceive no obstacle whatever arising from the want of school-masters, to the establishment of an universal system of national education in that country.

But the most important of all inquiries on this subject is, are the people of Ireland disposed to favour the establishment of schools; are they anxious to educate and enlighten their children? And, yet, when we advert to some circumstances connected with the history of Ireland, this question, when put with regard

to it, seems superfluous; since the people of that country have been distinguished for the efforts which at former periods they have made to acquire some share of book-learning. I do not mean to say that education was at any period common among them, or that knowledge was at any time greatly diffused; but it is certain that individuals in the lowest situation of life, in order to acquire information, have struggled with the difficulties of their lot, and begged their bread rather than suffer themselves to remain in total ignorance*. Every one has heard of the hedge schools, so common in Ireland, where crowds of poor children on the side of the road are taught to read and write. In every instance where the Irish language is taught, and where there is no offence given to the prejudices of the natives, parents discover the utmost solicitude to have their offspring instructed, and almost universally send them to school. Wherever I travelled in Ireland, the poor in their cabins regretted the want of teachers, and seemed very anxious to afford their children some learning.

It appears then that no serious obstacles

*I was astonished to find in the wildest part of Donnegal-shire, a man with neither shoes nor stockings, who gave me a very clear and correct account of the peculiarities of Irish grammar.

oppose the introduction of parochial schools into Ireland. The people are willing to receive them; school-masters may easily be procured; and a government of so many resources as the British can scarcely grudge the money expended in their support. It should be recollected, however, that every thing depends on those under whose superintendence such schools must in some degree be placed.

SECTION III.

On the Utility of Preaching in the Irish Language.

I HAVE adverted so frequently to the propriety of instructing the people of Ireland through the medium of their own language, that it is unnecessary to enter into any farther disquisitions on the subject. If, however, preaching be considered as a most popular and efficient means of communicating knowledge, and if the best system of national education be deemed incomplete without it, the manner in which it is conducted in the protestant church in Ireland, and its perfect inutility while it is thus conducted to a great part of the Irish population, merits the most serious attention.

While the repose of the Roman Catholic Church remained undisturbed in that country, the priests, except a very few who were within the English pale, understood the Irish language: and though, from the custom of the religious body with which they were connected, they performed divine service in the Latin tongue, they were able to recommend them-

selves to the people by speaking that which was vernacular. When episcopacy, however, was established in place of the old religion, owing partly to a difficulty of procuring proper pastors, and partly owing to the prejudices of the English, the churches were supplied with ministers who were not only ignorant of the tongue which the great majority of the people understood, but affected to despise it as what they called the language of Catholicism, and of the wild Irish. This prejudice was increased prodigiously after the termination of the civil war, which was concluded by the treaty of Limerick : the penal laws which before this period were scarcely felt, were now rigorously put in execution ; and the intellectual, and moral, and religious claims of the unfortunate *Irish*, were from this æra totally disregarded. To the present day there is not one clergyman in the Established Church of Ireland, who preaches in that dialect in which alone they can be intelligible to most of their people*.

There seems to be only two ways in which this evil can be remedied : the one is, by obliging every clergyman who is presented to a living where the Irish is spoken, to acquire

* This remark is obviously to be restricted to those parts of Ireland where the Irish is spoken.

that language so as to be able to preach through its medium ; the other is to employ dissenters or presbyterians from Scotland, who are acquainted with the Gaelic. As to the first of these methods, it is not very likely that it will ever be followed ; if it were adopted, however, the happy effects which must result are incalculable. It would present the Established Church, to that part of the Irish population who only understand the Irish language, in a light in which they have never been accustomed to view her. The clergy would acquire an influence and popularity with the people, of the extent of which they are not at present aware ; and the most efficient means of reforming the multitude, and of converting them from the errors of popery, would be fairly placed within their power. Though the execution of this plan is certainly attended with difficulties, these do not seem to be insuperable. It is competent for the legislature to say, that in any specified district after a certain period, no clergyman can be considered qualified to accept of a living, unless he is able to preach in the Irish tongue.

The second plan is, perhaps, the more practicable, and its execution, therefore, is the more probable. In this country there are many from the Highlands educated for the church of Scotland, who, if supported by govern-

ment, might be inclined to exercise their ministry in Ireland. These, if truly pious and prudent, and sufficiently numerous, would by their labours improve the moral condition of the people, and give an increased effect, by their example and instructions, to any system of education which may be established. It is surely very evident, that though the people should be educated, they suffer great disadvantages while there is no information afforded them from the pulpit, while there is no familiar exposition given them of the doctrines and morality of that sacred book which the exercises of the school have enabled them to read. It is not only necessary for children to have their infant minds impressed with the principles of truth, and piety, and righteousness: the same impression must be made again in endless succession through life, before the character can be fully formed, and the powers and passions of the mind be rendered obsequious to the dictates of reason and religion.

The divine Author of the Christian Religion, in appointing the sabbath for purposes of devotion and instruction, has graciously accommodated his institutions to the weaknesses and returning necessities of man. The great body of the people, who are incessantly occupied with the business and cares of life, and who have little leisure to attend carefully to the

formation of their principles and habits, are indebted, for the most part, to the pulpit for the religious knowledge which they possess, and for that tender, and consoling, and sublime devotion which cheers and supports amid the varied hardships to which they are exposed. How melancholy then is the situation of those, who, with all the hardships, and temptations, and trials of human life, want the cheering hopes, the enlightened instruction, the soothing and ameliorating consolations, by which the Author of our nature has intended to soften and sanctify the path to the grave! Yet, these are the circumstances in which many of the people of Ireland are placed: they are destitute, not merely of education, but of that moral and religious instruction which is conveyed by preaching. Though the state has liberally endowed the Established Church, there is a considerable proportion of the Irish population, who, on account of their ignorance of the English language, can derive no benefit whatever from the sermons which are there delivered. The method which I have pointed out, of procuring preachers from Scotland acquainted with the Gaelic, presents an immediate, and perhaps the only practicable remedy for this evil.

It will be said, that a sufficient number cannot

be procured from Scotland; that the supply of preachers of the requisite description is not adequate to answer the demand, from the Highlands. There is an acknowledged principle in political economy which obviates this difficulty, that the supply in the market of any commodity will, in all ordinary circumstances, correspond to the demand. Preachers, though their character be sacred, and the duties of their office holy, resemble in this respect every other profession and every other commodity. Their number will be diminished or increased in proportion to the encouragement which is afforded them, and to the demand which the religious necessities of the public create. In the present case, it is no doubt peculiarly necessary to attend to the character, and piety, and tempered zeal of such Christian instructors, as are sent to a country like Ireland; since a total deficiency in these qualities must be attended with the worst consequences.

As to the expediency and necessity of adopting, with regard to Ireland, some such plan as I have been here recommending, it will readily be admitted by all who are capable of judging on the subject, and on which, therefore, I think it idle to enlarge. But surely I may say, that while Christian Missionaries are sent forth to the Islands of the South Sea, to India, and

Africa, the moral and religious instruction of a people so closely linked to us, in civil and political interest as the Irish should not be entirely neglected. Should this, however, be the case, and should the powerful claims of this unfortunate people be overlooked, I have the satisfaction to think that I have done my duty in urging them on the attention of my countrymen.

CHAP. XII.

ON THE POVERTY OF THE PEASANTRY AND
INFERIOR ORDERS OF THE IRISH.

THE condition of the inferior orders of a people affords a good criterion by which the prosperity and happiness of the community may be ascertained. Wherever this is wretchedly poor, as in Italy and in Ireland, though there may be many wealthy individuals in the nation, there must be some causes either moral or political which affect the general improvement of the people, and it is our duty to attempt the discovery of these in place of blaming them for obstinate stupidity.

The poverty of the tenantry and labouring classes in Ireland arises from a combination of circumstances, to some of which I have already alluded. There are some subordinate peculiarities in their situation which on this subject should be attended to.—It has been said by travellers that they are indolent, and that their extreme poverty is occasioned by a want of industry. But this is saying nothing to the purpose, since it only informs us that they are poor without as-

signing an adequate cause. For what is it that makes one people lazy, and another active and industrious? It is not the physical influence of the climate, (though perhaps where the difference of latitude is great, it may have some slight effect on the human constitution;) it is motive presented to the mind that makes a nation laborious and rich. A nation is made up of individuals, and as every individual will exert himself in proportion to the stimulus which he has to exertion, so will a whole nation be industrious, in proportion as it has encouragement to industry. Now, as it regards Ireland, the three general causes which retard the improvement of a people, political arrangement, national religion, and inveterate prejudice, will be found to unite.

First, with regard to national religion: and here let it be observed that I call the Roman Catholic the national religion, though it is not the established, since it is professed by the great body of the people. There is one way in which this is evidently injurious to the industry and morals of those who are under its influence; I refer to the many days of idleness and dissipation which it prescribes. This was remarked by Arthur Dobbs, who wrote a treatise on the improvement of Ireland eighty years ago: referring to the holidays, he says,

“ these they spend in idleness, to the loss of the public and their own detriment, half starving their families by not working a competent part of their time. Nor would it be a detriment, if we lessened the number of our *own* legal holidays, and had more working days: for since the original intention of them is not complied with, to frequent the church for instruction and prayers, the public ought not to suffer the loss, by their making it a cloak for idleness and debauchery.”

“ I shall here beg leave to make a gross computation of the loss the nation sustains by the great number of our holidays and by the still greater number of the popish holidays.”

“ There are twenty-six popish holidays kept in England, more than the thirty-two kept by our law: but by our Irish calendar I apprehend, there are many more; for in an almanack I have seen some time ago, in which the popish holidays were distinguished, I have observed at least forty-nine more than our law allows; considering also that the common Irish papists keep St. Patrick's day, his wife's, and wife's mother's, with many others equally ridiculous, I believe that number is of the least. However, as in all my computations, I have endeavoured to be within the truth, I shall here only suppose them twenty-six as in Eng-

land, and form a calculation from that number. I observed before, that there are at least 1,669,644 persons in Ireland. I suppose of this number 1,200,000 are papists of all ages; and 600,000 of these capable of gaining five pence per day, one day with another, by service, labour, manufacture, or spinning; there being then twenty-six popish holidays, each person loses ten shillings and ten pence, which multiplied by the number of labouring persons, amounts annually to £225,000, lost to the kingdom by the popish holidays alone.—These days are now spent in debauchery and rioting, by those who ought to labour; whilst perhaps their children are half starved at home, or turn idle, and beg and steal, to support themselves. Would it not then be more reasonable to lessen the number of our *own* legal holidays, by taking away such days as keep up the spirit of division and parties among us; than to connive at the idling away of those not allowed by law, which the papists do at present to the great prejudice of the kingdom.”

It is not, however, on the influence of holidays in directly preventing labour and diminishing the national wealth, that I feel disposed to place most stress, but on their tendency indirectly to produce idleness and immorality.

A man who spends a sixth of his whole time at the amusements of holidays, at fairs, and wakes, and funerals, and perhaps on all these occasions drinks whisky to excess, is not very likely to acquire those habits of sobriety, and plodding industry, which in any condition are highly useful, but which, in that of a working man, are essential to competence and comfort. It is not merely the time that is spent idly, it is the manner in which it is spent that chiefly affects national morals, and consequently national wealth. It is probable that in a country such as Scotland, where the people observe the Sunday with religious veneration, and consider every species of levity and intemperance on that day with abhorrence, there is as much work performed in the course of the year, as though every seventh day were devoted to labour. In this case, there is not only an abstinence from those excesses which form bad habits, but there is attention given to the precepts of that pure religion, which forms those that are virtuous and useful. In many counties of Ireland, the Sunday may be added, as it respects the catholic population, to the number of pernicious holidays, since they generally spend the greater part of it, not in acts of devotion, but in drinking, and dancing,

and fighting. * The morning, indeed, by some, may be employed at chapel, where the priest unfortunately seldom thinks it necessary to impart any instruction, further than an occasional lecture on the heinous and damnable sin of not punctually paying his dues, which contributes little to the edification or improvement of his flock.

From all this idleness arises the habit of drinking spirituous liquors to excess; or rather, the one and the other operate as cause and effect. The quantity of whisky consumed by the lower orders of the Irish, is so great, as to render the relation of the fact almost incredible. At funerals, in some parts of Ireland, there are many gallons of whisky placed in the church yard, where those who are present at the interment drink often to inebriation. The consequence in all such cases is frequently a battle—As to a wake, whole nights and days are spent in drinking; the people whose relation is dead are impoverished; and those who attend lose their time, their health, and their morals: from the time the person is dead till he is interred, whisky is perpetually drunk, and the whole business is concluded by complete intoxication. The fairs present a scene

* This remark in its application is obviously to be restricted to the inferior orders of the *people*.

of perfect confusion and intemperance, which is seldom finished without an engagement with the shellela.

It is not to be supposed that the Popish religion directly produces habits of inebriation; but it sanctions the idleness of an ignorant and superstitious people, by appointing so many holidays, and by making intoxication a trifling offence: and these vices partly occasion that poverty and wretchedness which cover so great a portion of Ireland. True religion has a much greater influence on national wealth, than most people seem to be aware of. All will readily allow its importance as it regards virtue in general, and a preparation for a future state of existence; but they do not seem always to recollect, that the virtues which it enjoins are directly calculated to increase opulence and national happiness. It will be found that superstition in every instance is favourable to idleness, obstructive to commerce and manufactures, whilst enlightened piety, and sound morality, promote industry, and every species of improvement. It was to its protestant subjects that France was chiefly indebted for its progress in manufactures and commerce during the sixteenth century; it is to foreigners, persecuted in their own country on account of their religion, that England

owes a considerable share of its eminence in several important branches of trade: and as to Ireland it had little or no manufacture of linen, even for home consumption, till towards the end of Charles the Second's reign, when the persecution then raised against the dissenters in Scotland, forced many of them over to the north of Ireland, where they began the linen manufacture of Ireland. Before that time, and for some years after, the Irish were furnished with considerable quantities of linen from Scotland; but from that time they began to furnish themselves; and the persecution set up against the protestants in France, after the revocation of the edict of Nantes, in the year 1685, accomplished what the persecution in Scotland had begun: for after the revolution many of the French refugees settled in Ireland, and greatly improved their manufacture of linens, especially those of the finer sort. Thus the Irish stand indebted for the establishment of their linen manufacture, rather to the bad conduct of their neighbours, than to any good conduct of their own, or to any encouragement from England.*

How is the influence of superstition in Ireland, which, if it does not directly produce idleness and vice, affords no principle of exer-

* Dobbs on the Trade, &c. of Ireland.

tion and industry, to be diminished and counteracted? It is evident that this can never be effected by either compulsory, or penal laws; many favourable circumstances must concur entirely to remove evils which are become so inveterate. Education, however, will accomplish a great deal: it will impart to the mind something by which its powers may be exercised, by which its latent energies will be developed, and by which its activity will be increased and properly directed.

The immediate cause of the indolence of the Irish, is the facility with which they procure the means of subsistence. "In Ireland," says Sir William Temple, "by the largeness and plenty of the soil, all things necessary to life are so cheap, that an industrious man, by two days labour, may gain enough to feed him the rest of the week: which I take to be a very plain ground of the laziness attributed to that people. For men naturally prefer ease before labour, and will not take pains if they can live idle."—Wherever any people obtain by the labour of four days, potatoes sufficient to feed them for six, it cannot be supposed that they will be industrious during the whole of the week. Though it must be confessed, that this very circumstance tends ultimately to counteract the evils of such a condition, by limit-

ing the quantity of labour to the extent of the capital destined for its support.

I feel a difficulty in saying whether the state of the Irish peasantry in general be greatly improved. Where there is so much poverty and wretchedness it is nearly impossible to ascertain with much precision the comparative advantages of the present generation, above those of their fathers. It is certain that little improvement has taken place in the comforts of the peasantry and lower orders in many counties; nor, indeed, is it possible that there should be any great amelioration in their condition, while they continue to give, as they now do, almost the whole produce of the land to the proprietor, content to live on a scanty and comfortless subsistence.

The number of mendicants in Ireland, especially in those parts where the population is chiefly Catholic, is extremely great. The very lower orders of farmers, or, rather, such as in England would be called cottagers, after they have planted their potatoes, often leave home on a begging excursion, and continue their tour till harvest. In such a country, where it is not thought dishonourable to beg, and where it is deemed extremely meritorious to relieve beggars of every description, their number must necessarily be great. In

circumstances where such opinions are prevalent, the introduction of a system of poor-rates, like that in England, would only increase and perpetuate the evils of poverty.

In answering the question, how are we to relieve the wants of the indigent without increasing the number of the poor, regard should uniformly be had to the moral and religious instruction of the lower orders. It is this, chiefly, that produces that spirit of independence, which attaches meanness and shame to the provision of a workhouse,—which leads the parent to care for his offspring, and the children to console and support the age of their parents,—and which will render the humblest cottage, the abode not only of comfort, but of virtuous and generous exertion.

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NOTES.

A. (P. 53.)

THE Highlanders denominate the nearest relative of the heir apparent *Tànister*. This name seems to imply, that the *usages* of Tanistry were originally common both to the Highlanders and Irish: they were afterwards modified by the different circumstances in which these nations have been placed.

The Tanister of a chieftain was always a person of considerable distinction with the clan. This was the case also among the Irish.

“ By the Irish custom of Tanistry,” says Davies, “ the chieftains of every country, and the chief of every sept, had no longer estate than for life in their chieferies; and when their chieftains were dead, their sons, or next heirs, did not succeed them, but their tanists, who were elective, and purchased their elections by strong hand.”

“ The Irish hold their lands by *tanistry*, which is no more than a personal estate for his life time that is tanist, by reason that he is admitted thereto

“ by election.” The manner in which the tanist was appointed is thus described. “ Presently after the death of any of their captains, they assemble themselves to chuse another in his stead, and nominate the next brother; and then next to him do they chuse next of the blood to the tanist, who shall next succeed him in the said captaincy.”—Spencer’s View of Ireland.

The custom of Gavelkind has doubtless been derived from the same origin. “ The partible quality also of lands, by the custom of Gavelkind, which still obtains in many parts of England, and did universally over Wales till the reign of Henry VIII. is undoubtedly of British original. So likewise is the ancient division of the goods of an intestate between his widow and children, or next of kin; which has since been revived by the statute of distributions.”—Blackstone’s Commentaries, Vol. iv. p. 408.

“ I have heard that the beginning and cause of this ordinance among the Irish, was especially for the defence and maintenance of their lands in their posterity, and for excluding all innovation or alienation thereof unto strangers, and especially to the English. For when their captain dieth, if the Signiorie should descend to his child, and he perhaps an infant, another peradventure step in between, or thrust him out by strong hand, being then unable to defend his right, or to withstand the force of a foreigner, and, therefore they do appoint the eldest of the kinne to have the Signiorie, for that he commonly is a man of strong years, and better experience to maintain the inheri-

“ tance, and to defend the country, either against the
“ next bordering lords which use commonly to encroach
“ one on another, as each one is stronger, or against the
“ English, which *they think lie still in wait to wipe them*
“ *out of their lands and territories.* And to this end the
“ Tanist is always ready known, if it should happen
“ the captain suddenly to die, or to be slain in battle, or
“ to be out of the country, to defend and keep it from
“ all such doubts and dangers. For which cause the
“ *Tanist* has also a share of the country allotted unto
“ him, and certain cuttings and spendings upon all the
“ inhabitants under the lord.”—Spencer’s View of Ire-
land.

B. (P. 69.)

(POETRY.)

IT must certainly be allowed, that there are some beautiful pieces of Irish poetry still extant; but I have met with scarcely any thing comparable to the Gaelic poetry ascribed to Ossian. The Irish, indeed, have poems which they attribute to Ossian; they are, however, as different from the Highland poems which bear the same name, as the productions of the first of poets are from those of the most insignificant rhymers.

Let it not be thought that this opinion proceeds from nationality: for no one can be more willing to do the fullest justice to every subject which may be supposed in any way to affect the honour of the Irish nation than myself. But it is impossible for any one to read a page of that invaluable treasure of Gaelic poetry ascribed to Ossian, without feeling satisfied that its author possessed a genius of the first order, and that no poet of modern times was competent for such a production. This is the opinion of every one who has read these poems *in Gaelic*, however unbelieving formerly.

Let those who have doubted of the authenticity of these poems in consequence of the fallacious remarks of Mr. Laing, compare his critique with the Gaelic and not with the translation of Macpherson. They will find, that those *phrases* from which Mr.

Laing thinks he discovers plagiarism do not belong to Ossian, but to his spirited translator; and that, consequently, the laboured critique of this gentleman comes to nothing. It only proves that Macpherson, instead of expressing the ideas of his poet in language altogether his own, accepted, in some instances, of those which were formed ready for his use, and which he, no doubt, conceived, nearly conveyed the meaning of the Celtic Bard.

C. (P. 74.)

ELIZABETH had acts of parliament passed, not only against the bards, but against all those who entertained them. The following articles, says Walker, in his *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards*, collected from those acts, were assented to by the Earl of Desmond, to be observed in the state. “Forasmuch as no small
 “ enormities doo growe within those shires, (i. e. the
 “ counties of Cork, Limerick, and Kerry,) by the con-
 “ tinuall recourse of certen idle men of lewde de-
 “ meanor, called rymers, bards, and dyce players,
 “ called carroghs, who under pretence of their travaill
 “ doo bring privy intellygence betwene the malefac-
 “ tors inhabitynge in these several shires, to the grete
 “ destruction of true subjects, that ordres be taken
 “ with the said lordes and gentlemen (his followers,)
 “ that none of those sects, nor outhere like evil per-
 “ sons, be suffride to travaill within their rules, as the
 “ statutes of Irelande doo appoint, and that procla-
 “ mation be made accordingly, and that whosoever
 “ after the proclamation shall mayntaine or suffre any
 “ suche idle-men within their several terrytories, that
 “ he or they shall paye suche fines as to the discretion of
 “ the said commissioners or presidents (i. e. of Munster,)
 “ for the time being shall be thought goode. For
 “ that those rymers do by their ditties and rhymes
 “ made to dyverse lords and gentlemen in Irelande in
 “ the commendacion and highe praise of extorsion,
 “ rebellyon, rape, raven and outhere injustice, en-

“ courage those lords and gentlemen rather to
“ follow those vices than to leave them, and for mak-
“ ing of suche rymes rewards are given by the saide
“ lords and gentlemen, that for abolishinge so hey-
“ nouse an abuse ordres be taken with the saide earle,
“ lordes, and gentlemen, that none of them, from
“ henceforth, doo give any rewarde for any suche
“ lewde rhymes, and he that shall offend the ordres to
“ pay for a fine to the queene’s majestie double
“ of the value of that he shall so paye, and
“ that the rymer that shall make any such rymes or
“ ditties shall make fyne according to the discretiance
“ of the said commissioners, and that proclamation be
“ made accordingly.”—This law passed in the year
1563.

D. (P. 75.)

THE following poetical declamation, from O'Connor's Dissertation on the History of Ireland, though it may have received a little of its spirit from the translator, affords a good specimen of the powerful strains by which the bards attempted to rouse the indignation of their countrymen.

“Oh! the condition of our dear countrymen!—The
“ wretched crew of a vessel tossed long about; finally
“ cast away. Are we not the prisoners of the Saxon
“ nation? The captives of remorseless tyranny? Is
“ not our sentence therefore pronounced, and our
“ destruction inevitable? Frightful grinding thought!
“ Power exchanged for servitude; beauty for deformity;
“ the exultations of liberty for the pangs of
“ slavery; a great and brave people, for a servile and
“ desponding race. How came this transformation?
“ Shrouded in a mist, which bursts down on you
“ like a deluge; which covers you with successive
“ inundations of evil; ye are not the same people!
“ Need I appeal to your senses? But sensations have
“ left you! In most parts of the island, how hath
“ every kind of illegal and extra-judicial proceeding
“ taken the pay of law and equity? And what must
“ that situation be, wherein our only security (the
“ suspensions of our excision) must depend upon an
“ intolerable subservience to lawless law? In truth,

“ our miseries were predicted a long time, in the
“ change these strangers wrought in the face of our
“ country. They have hemmed in our sporting lawns,
“ the former theatres of glory and virtue. They have
“ wounded the earth, and they have disfigured with
“ towers and ramparts those fair fields which nature
“ bestowed for the support of God’s animal creation;
“ that nature which we see defrauded, and whose
“ laws are so wantonly counteracted, that this late
“ free Ireland is metamorphosed into a second Saxony.
“ The slaves of Ireland no longer recognize their
“ common mother, she equally disowns us for her
“ children; we both have lost our forms, and what
“ do we see but insulting Saxon natives, and *native*
“ *Irish aliens*? Hapless land! Thou art a bank,
“ through which the sea hath burst its way; we
“ hardly discover any part of thee in the hands of the
“ plunderer. Yes! the plunderer hath refitted you
“ for his own habitation; and we are new moulded
“ for his purposes. Ye Israelites of Egypt; ye
“ wretched inhabitants of this foreign land! Is there
“ no relief for you? Is there no Hector left for the
“ defence or rather for the recovery of Troy? It is
“ thine, O my God! to send us a second Moses.
“ Thy dispensations are just! And unless the chil-
“ dren of the Scythian Eber Scot return to thee, old
“ Ireland is not doomed to arise out of the ashes of
“ modern Saxony.”

E. (P. 98.)

The following letter was written by a Welch clergyman; and the remarks which it contains on the expediency of teaching children in the first instance in the language which they understand, are so obviously just, as to merit the fullest consideration.

“ As to the *expediency* of teaching young people, in
“ the *first* place, to read the language they generally
“ speak and best understand, if imparting religious
“ knowledge is our primary object, as it most cer-
“ tainly *ought* to be, in instructing *immortal* beings, it
“ needs no proof, for it is self-evident. However, I
“ beg your attention for a moment to the following
“ particulars: making no apology for the great length
“ of this letter, as you desired me to be particular.—
“ 1. The time necessary to teach them to read the
“ Bible in their *vernacular* language is so short, not
“ exceeding six months in general, that it is a great
“ pity not to give them the key immediately which un-
“ locks all the doors, and lays open all the divine
“ treasures before them. Teaching them English re-
“ quires two or three years' time, during which long
“ period, they are concerned only about dry terms,
“ without receiving one idea for their improvement.—
“ 2. Welch words convey ideas to their infant minds as
“ soon as they can read them, which is not the case
“ when they are taught to read a language they do
“ not understand.—3. When they can read Welch,

“ Scriptural terms become intelligible and familiar to
“ them, so as to enable them to understand the dis-
“ courses delivered to them in that language (the
“ language in general preached through the principa-
“ lity ;) which, of course, must prove more profitable
“ than if they could not read at all, or read only the
“ English language.—4. Previous instruction in their
“ native tongue, helps them to learn English *much*
“ *sooner*, instead of proving in any degree an incon-
“ veniency. This I have had repeated proofs of, and
“ can confidently vouch for the truth of it. I took
“ this method of instructing my own children, with
“ the view of convincing the country of the fallacy of
“ the general notion which prevailed to the contrary ;
“ and I have persuaded others to follow my plan,
“ which, without one exception, has proved the truth
“ of what I conceived to be really the case.—5. Having
“ acquired new ideas by reading a language they un-
“ derstand, excitement is naturally produced to seek
“ for knowledge ; and as our ancient language is very
“ deficient in the means of instruction, there being few
“ useful books printed in it, a desire to learn English,
“ yea, and other languages also, is excited, for the sake
“ of increasing their stock of ideas, and adding to their
“ fund of knowledge. I can vouch for the truth of it,
“ that there are *twenty to one* who can now read Eng-
“ lish, to what could when the Welch was entirely
“ neglected. The knowledge of the English is be-
“ come necessary, from the treasure contained in it.
“ English books are now generally called for ; there
“ are now a hundred books, I am sure, for every one
“ that was in the country when I removed from
“ England, and first became a resident of these parts.

“ English schools are every where called for, and I
“ have been obliged to send young men to English
“ schools to be trained up for English teachers, that
“ I might be able, in some degree, to answer the general
“ demand for them. In short, the whole country
“ is in a manner emerging from a state of ignorance
“ and ferocious barbarity to civilization and piety,
“ and that principally by means of the Welch schools.
“ Bibles without end are called for, and read diligently,
“ learned out by heart, and searched into
“ with unwearied assiduity and care. Instead of
“ vain amusements, dancing, card playing, inter-
“ ludes, quarrelling, and barbarous and most cruel
“ fightings, we have now prayer meetings; our congregations
“ are crowded, and public catechising is
“ become pleasant, familiar, and profitable. One
“ great means of this blessed change, has been the
“ Welch schools.—6. By teaching the Welch *first*,
“ we prove to them that we are principally concerned
“ about their souls, and thereby naturally
“ impress their minds with the vast importance of
“ acquiring the knowledge of divine truths, in which
“ the way of salvation, our duty to God and man,
“ is revealed; whereas, that most important point is
“ totally out of sight by teaching them English; for
“ the acquisition of the English is concerned *only*
“ with their temporal concerns, and which they may
“ never want, as they may, as the majority do, die
“ in infancy. In my opinion, in the education of
“ children, it is of the utmost importance, in the *first*
“ place to impress their minds with a sense that
“ they are candidates for another world, and that

“ the things pertaining to their eternal felicity *there*,
“ are of infinitely greater importance to them, than
“ the little concerns which belong to our short
“ existence. The neglect of this is, I apprehend,
“ a very great defect in the education of children.
“ What I have put down here, is, I apprehend,
“ *equally applicable to the Irish and the Highlanders*,
“ as to the Welch.”

G. (P. 139.)

It is curious, as well as melancholy, to remark the erroneous sentiments that have prevailed respecting the education of the *people*, even among those who in other respects are well informed. On this subject Mr. Linguet, counsellor of the Parliament of Paris, makes the following observations, in a letter to Voltaire. “ I think with you, Sir, that literature, the
“ arts, and every thing that relates to them, are inven-
“ tions highly useful for the rich ; excellent resources
“ for men of leisure who enjoy superfluity. These
“ are corals which amuse them in the state of per-
“ petual infancy, in which they are kept by their
“ opulence. Their vivacity evaporates upon
“ those trifles with which they amuse themselves.
“ The attention they pay to them, prevents their mak-
“ ing use of their strength to more dangerous pur-
“ poses. But I believe the case to be entirely differ-
“ ent with that other, and infinitely more numerous,
“ portion of mankind, who are called the people.
“ These intellectual corals become to them poisoned
“ amulets, which spoil and corrupt them without
“ remedy. The actual state of society condemns
“ them to have only hands; *all is lost the moment*
“ *they are put in a condition of perceiving that they have*
“ *a soul.*

“ Could one of those divisions of mankind be singly
“ illuminated ; were it possible to intercept all the

“ rays which proceed from the little to the great,
 “ and to cover with everlasting darkness only that of
 “ the two which is no longer useful than while it is
 “ totally blind, I would willingly applaud the labours of the philosophers and their partizans.

“ But reflect, Sir, the sun cannot rise upon the first,
 “ without a twilight extending to the second, however distant it may be; and this class, when enlightened, necessarily inclines to appreciate, or to mix with the other. Hence it follows that light is fatal to both; and that an obscurity in which they might live quietly, each within its respective limits, is infinitely preferable to a state of illumination, by which they only learn reciprocally to despise or detest one another.”

Were the sentiments contained in this passage correct, they would present a view of human nature truly melancholy. In this case the benevolent task of enlightening the ignorant must be relinquished; since these, as soon as they come to know that they have powers of mind susceptible of improvement, will not only be less happy than before, but will learn to despise or detest their superiors. But the friend of man has nothing to fear; the opinions of Mr. Linguet are as far from the truth as the east is from the west. “ No, Sir,” says Voltaire, in reply, “ *all is not lost, the moment the people are put in a condition of perceiving that they have a soul. On the contrary, all is lost when they are treated like a herd of bulls; for sooner or later they butt you with their horns.*” Hist. Memoirs of the Author of the Henriade, p. 194.

Many well intentioned people seem to entertain a fear lest the common people should get too much learning. Count Rumford, the patron of the poor, observes, that “ it is certain that too much learning is “ rather disadvantageous than otherwise to the lower “ classes of the people.” (Rumford’s Essays, Vol. 1. p. 391.) But why is so much anxiety entertained on this head? The lower classes of the people have it not in their power to acquire *too much learning*.

“ In free governments, some considerable improve-
“ ment of the understanding is necessary even for the
“ lowest orders of the people; and much strength
“ of religious principle is requisite to govern the
“ individual, in those common concerns of his private
“ life in which the laws leave the meanest subject,
“ equally with his betters, master of himself. Des-
“ potism, sincere, unalloyed, rigid despotism is the
“ only form of government which may, with safety
“ to itself, neglect the education of its infant poor.
“ Where it is the principle of government that the
“ common people are to be ruled as mere animals,
“ it might indeed be impolitic to suffer them to ac-
“ quire the moral discernment and the spontaneity of
“ man; but in free states, whether monarchical, or of
“ whatever form, the case is exactly the reverse. The
“ schemes of providence and nature are too deeply
“ laid to be overthrown by man’s impolicy. It is
“ contrary to the order of nature, it is repugnant to
“ the decrees of providence; and, therefore, the
“ thing shall never be, that civil liberty should long
“ maintain its ground among any people, disqualified
“ by ignorance and profligacy for the use and enjoy-

“ ment of it. Hence, the greatest danger threatens
“ every free constitution, when by a neglect of a due
“ culture of the infant mind, barbarism and irreligion
“ are suffered to overrun the lower orders. Ignor-
“ ance and irreligion, were they once to prevail
“ generally in the lower ranks of society, would
“ necessarily terminate in one or the other of these
“ two dreadful evils,—the dissolution of all govern-
“ ment, or the enslaving of the majority of mankind.”
—Bishop Horsley’s discourse before the Society for
promoting Christian Knowledge, 1793.

H.

MR. NEWENHAM makes the following extraordinary remark in his last publication. “Elevated
 “both by their revenues, and above the level of the
 “other clergy, the Roman Catholic prelates form a
 “necessary point of contact between the govern-
 “ment and them. Their stations, and the talents
 “for which they have been generally conspicuous,
 “give them an unlimited influence over the clergy.
 “Their pastoral addresses have been of essential ser-
 “vice in arresting or delaying the progress of dis-
 “affection. The countenance which they have
 “generally afforded to the instruction of the lower
 “order, has eminently conduced to raise that order,
 “contrary to the utterly erroneous opinion which
 “seems to prevail in Britain, *very far above the level*
 “*of the same order there, in point of literary attain-*
 “*ments.*”

I am very willing to allow the Roman Catholic bishops all the virtues and talents which Mr. Newenham assigns them, as well as to believe that they have produced an important change in the general character of the inferior clergy; I hope the change will be still greater. Popery like every other thing under the sun is subject to mutation; it is not now in any country what it was a century ago; and in the course of another hundred years it will present a different appearance

from that which even now it assumes. Having made this concession, I must utterly deny the truth of what is insinuated and affirmed in the latter part of the above remark. First, it is insinuated that the Roman Catholic clergy encourage the education of the poor. That the bishops and many of the inferior clergy do so may be granted. But it is most certain, that in several parts of Ireland the parish priests have given no small degree of opposition to the introduction of schools. I mention this circumstance not with any desire to excite prejudice against these misguided individuals, or against the denomination to which they belong ; but that their superiors may put an end to a practice so unbecoming men who profess to be Christian teachers, and so injurious to the best interests of the country to which they belong.

Secondly, it is affirmed that the inferior orders of Ireland are far above the level of the same order in Britain, in point of literary attainments. I should rejoice to think that this were the case. But so fully convinced am I of the contrary, that the reasonings of the foregoing pages are founded on the supposition that the lower orders of the people of Ireland are *grossly ignorant*. I have travelled through a considerable part of Connaught, Ulster, and Munster, and have conversed with the people in their own dialect, and found them ignorant to a degree which must far surpass the belief of the people of Great Britain. My remarks on the Irish character shew that I am as willing as Mr. N. to do justice to that character, to hold it in very high estimation. But my regard for that

character cannot induce me to conceal facts, facts too, which all the world know. In the county of Kerry, indeed, Mr. Smith says, that classical reading extends itself even to a fault amongst the lower and poorer kind; many of whom, to the taking them off more useful works, have greater knowledge in this way, than some of the better sort in other places; neither is the genius of the commonality confined to this kind of learning alone; for (says he,) "I saw a poor man
 " near Blackstones, who had a tolerable notion of calculating the epacts, golden number, dominical
 " letter, the moon's phases, and even eclipses,
 " although he had never been taught to read English."

That the native Irish are acute, and fond of knowledge is a truth that has never been questioned; and that many of them make extraordinary efforts to obtain information is equally certain. But the majority of them are sunk in the lowest state of ignorance and degradation. "Education," says Sir John Carr,
 " has never beamed on the poor Irishman; sentiments of honour have never been instilled into him;
 " and a spirit of just and social pride, improvement and enterprize have never opened upon him. The poor
 " Irishman looks around him, and sees a frightful
 " void between him and those who, in well regulated
 " communities, ought to be separated from each
 " other only by those gentle shades of colouring that
 " unite the brown russet to the imperial purple. He
 " has no more power of raising himself than an eagle
 " whose wings have been half shorn off their plu-

“ mage. The legislature has seldom noticed him
“ but in anger, when that ignorance, which it has
“ never stooped to remove, has precipitated him into
“ acts incompatible with social tranquillity, and repug-
“ nant to his nature.”

I.

AT this day, says Leland, it will not be regarded as a distinguishing mark of barbarity, that the most outrageous offences were punishable only by an *erie* or fine. That for murder was to be paid by the perpetrator, or his family, to the son, or relations of the deceased, and in proportion to their degrees of consanguinity; that for adultery, to the husband of the offender, by her father or nearest relations; or, if a bond-woman, by the tribe which entertained her, or by the church which she served. The incestuous person not only paid his *erie*, but was instantly expelled from his tribe. Nor could any man be admitted into a new tribe, until he had paid *erie* for all offences whatever committed in his former residence. The fine paid to a son for the murder of his father was rated at seven *cumhals*, as they were called, or twenty-one kine. Hence we may form a judgment of the lenity of their penal laws in other instances. The property and security of woods, the regulation of water courses, but above all the property of bees, on which depended the principal beverage of the people, were guarded by a number of minute institutions, which breath a spirit of equity and humanity. We are not to wonder that a people accustomed to the refinements found in their own laws, should be pronounced of all others the

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THE END.



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